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# THREE CENTURIES OF SCOTTISH LITERATURE.

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# THREE CENTURIES OF SCOTTISH LITERATURE

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BY

HUGH WALKER, M.A.

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN ST. DAVID'S COLLEGE, LAMPETER

VOL. I

THE REFORMATION TO THE UNION

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# PREFACE.

THE history of Scottish literature (under which term Gaelic literature is not here included) is divisible into two great periods. The first extends from the dawn of letters in Scotland to the time when the desire for religious reform began to affect literature vitally; the second starts then, and extends down almost to the present day. Practically, the name of Lindsay is the first in the second period. Though he lived and wrote before the formal triumph of the Reformation, his principal works were deeply influenced by the spirit of religious reform; and there is none of his predecessors of whom this can be said. The lower limit of the period is less easily fixed. It has been frequently said, and I think it is substantially true, that a really national literature can no longer exist on a great scale in Scotland. There have been indeed some very remarkable and most distinctively Scottish books published in recent years. It would be most ungrateful on the part of any Scotchman to ignore or to underrate such work as that of Mr. R. L. Stevenson in his *Kidnapped*, of "Hugh

Haliburton" in his *Horace in Homespun*, or of Mr. J. M. Barrie in his pictures of Thrums. But probably these writers would be among the first to acknowledge that certain changes which have passed over the country since the days of Scott have narrowed the range of such work. The cities and the upper classes have been largely Anglicised. The Scotland of Lord Cockburn's Memoirs, with its Scotch-speaking Judges of Session, and its ladies of rank, entirely Scotch both in language and habits, is gone. Well marked national peculiarities are now to be found principally in the remoter and quieter rural districts, and in the lower classes of society. On the whole, it seems best to regard Scott as the last great figure in the Scotland which was the outcome of the Reformation.

Of the two periods thus defined, I have tried to deal only with the second. The history of the earlier period has been written within recent years; and probably popular curiosity on the subject is satisfied. There is however no book which professes to do what I have here attempted for the second period. My object has been to trace the literary movement for the three centuries between Lindsay and Scott. In order to do so, I have not thought it necessary to criticise, or even to mention, all the writers who flourished in Scotland during the period in question. I have preferred to single out those writers or groups of writers who seemed best to illustrate different aspects of literature, or different stages of its progress. Some authors extremely interesting in themselves, as for example Alexander Montgomery and Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, are passed over because they were somewhat isolated, and were not individually great enough to exercise a marked

influence. A number of much smaller men are criticised, because they happen to be members of groups which are collectively important. I have omitted others again, like the historians of the eighteenth century, because it seems to me that they almost entirely denationalised themselves. It is not merely that they wrote in English: several of the chapters which follow are devoted to men who likewise wrote in English. But I think that in the Anglo-Scottish poets of the eighteenth century there may be detected a flavour of nationality, which is less easily perceived in Hume and Robertson; while their brethren of the previous century are interesting just because their imitation of English models shows what, but for the struggle between Presbytery and Episcopacy, the union under James would probably have made Scottish literature. There are others, like James Hogg, in whom the national characteristics are prominent, and who are nevertheless omitted, because there is very little in them which cannot be illustrated under the greater names of Scott and Burns. My aim in short has been, not to include every name, but rather to illustrate every considerable movement.

A word of explanation may be necessary as to the scope of this book in respect of language. I have stated above the reason which has induced me to examine many who wrote in English; but it may seem peculiar that I have devoted a whole chapter to a writer in Latin. The reason is that in a literature so limited, comparatively, as that of Scotland, Buchanan is too great a figure, both for his writings and for his personality, to be neglected. In the same way, in English literature, the Latin writings of

Bacon demand a recognition which is not given to the ordinary Latinist.

I am greatly indebted to Professor Henry Jones, of St. Andrews, who has read both the manuscript and the proofs, and has made many valuable suggestions. I also owe thanks to the proprietors of the *Scots Magazine*, who have kindly permitted me to make use of an article on John Knox which appeared there. The chapter here devoted to Knox is however more comprehensive in its aim than that article, and in most respects different from it.

HUGH WALKER.

December, 1892.

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# THREE CENTURIES OF SCOTTISH LITERATURE.

## CHAPTER I.

## THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION.

### *LINDSAY AND THE WEDDERBURNS.*

THE part which literature played in the movement for religious reform in Scotland is not sufficiently recognised. It is true that Protestantism, after it had attained its full stature and strength, was well able to stand, and did stand, alone and unsupported; but this was by no means the case in the period of immaturity. At that time, the support which the Reformation received from literature was of prime importance. The principal, though not the sole, object of the present essay is to illustrate that support, with special reference to the poet Lindsay and the brothers Wedderburn.

All great movements are heralded by premonitory mutterings. We date the beginning of the Scottish Reformation in the second quarter of the sixteenth century; but all through the fifteenth, indications, scanty but sufficient, in Acts of Parliament and prosecutions for heresy, show that the religious unrest of other countries extended to Scotland. Towards its close, in 1494, the movement of the Lollards of Kyle proved that the discontent was be-

ginning to take definite form. But the Lollards were an solated body; and after their trial, Knox tells us, there was hardly any question of religion for nearly thirty years. He accordingly begins his history with the martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton in 1528.

In literature too there are first subdued murmurs or special criticisms, and then, after an interval, a determined attack. About the time when the Lollards of Kyle were raising their protest Dunbar was relieving his feelings by satire on the abuses of the Church. But Dunbar was no reformer either of religion or morals. He was a churchman who wore his faith loosely but without much questioning, and his discontent arose rather from personal grievances than from a sense of public wrongs. He was barely touched with the spirit of the Reformation. And for some time after Dunbar the great mass of the scholarship of the age ranged itself with more or less of reservation on the side of the ancient faith. It could not be otherwise. The lovers of learning were naturally attached to the Church which had fostered the Universities of St. Andrews, Glasgow, and Aberdeen. The sense of personal interest weighed in the same scale; and gratitude and hope united were powerful enough to attach to Rome those literary leaders who had reached middle age before the burning of Hamilton. Boece and Major were both of the Church party, and Bellenden, though he was a younger man, adopted similar views. James Inglis, Abbot of Culross, who was reputed one of the best poets of his time, was officially connected with the Church; but if the *General Satyre* ascribed to him in the Maitland MS.[1] be really his, he must be ranked among

[1] Bannatyne assigns it to Dunbar.

the most outspoken of the critics within her pale. The phrase in which Lindsay refers to him, "Culross hes his pen maid impotent,"[1] reminds us of one of the most effective weapons of defence in her armoury. A discontented priest was always apt to see things in a new light after he had been promoted.

But while habit, reverence for the past, and the natural ambition for preferment, all fought in favour of the maintenance of things as they were, the almost universal criticism of details proved the need of change. Time was with the innovators. In the course of a generation the battle was won and all the weight of learning and talent changed sides. No one at first foresaw the results of the conflict; not Knox himself when he entered the field, still less the literary assailants of the Church. But there were literary forerunners of the Reformation whose attitude was as definite as that of Patrick Hamilton; and of these the leaders in different spheres were Sir David Lindsay and George Buchanan. They wrote, not as trained and professional theologians, but as men of letters awake to the abuses of the time; and their favourite weapon was satire. Buchanan probably knew better than Lindsay what might be expected of the new movement; for during his residence abroad he had seen the effects of the Lutheran opinions, with which his countryman could hardly be acquainted except by report; but Lindsay is at once prior in time and more important in his practical bearing on the Reformation.

Lindsay came before the world as a poet almost in the very year of Patrick Hamilton's death; and as Knox

[1] *Complaynt of the Papyngo*—Prolog.

dates the beginning of a new era in religion from Hamilton, so we may date the opening of a new epoch in Scottish literature from Lindsay. He is usually mentioned along with Dunbar and Douglas, but he had no intimate connection with them except that of time. His lot was thrown in with the Reformation almost as decidedly as that of Knox; and he has reaped the reward of clearness of vision, honesty, and courage, in a popularity such as has fallen to the lot of none of his predecessors. Dunbar's name soon sank into obscurity, from which it was not rescued till the time of Allan Ramsay; but the name of Lindsay has never been forgotten by the peasantry of Scotland, and his works were for generations familiar to them. This fact alone goes far to prove how wide-reaching the influence of the Reformation was. Nothing lives through it unless it is connected with the story of the struggle for religious freedom, or, like Barbour's work, with the earlier but equally absorbing story of the War of Independence. The preference of the people for Lindsay is not due to critical blindness, but rather to the fact that he handles the theme of all others dearest to their heart: his brethren belong to a buried past, he is of the present.

The early history of Lindsay, like that of most of his brother poets, is obscure. Both the date and place of his birth are uncertain. He was descended from the noble house of Lindsay of Byres and owned two estates, Garmylton in East Lothian and the Mount in Fife; but though his name is always associated with the latter, and though tradition connects it with his birth, there is no clear evidence on the point. It is conjectured that he was born about the year 1490, and he seems to have been

educated at St. Andrews; but nothing definite is known regarding his life until he is found in an office about the court in the year 1511. On the birth of the young prince, afterwards James V., in 1512, he became specially attached to his service. He appears occasionally in attendance on the king; and, in particular, he was one of the witnesses of the famous apparition at Linlithgow which warned James to abandon his expedition against England. The story rests partly on the credit of Lindsay: Pitscottie in narrating it refers to him as a witness, though he does not allege his direct testimony; while Buchanan expressly asserts that he would have passed it over as a vulgar fable if he had not been assured of its truth by Lindsay,—"homo spectatae fidei et probitatis, nec a literarum studiis alienus, et cujus totae vitae tenor longissime a mentiendo aberat."[1] There is no reason to discredit either Lindsay's truthfulness or the fact of the apparition; what is doubtful is its supernatural character.

Lindsay's occupations at court, as described by himself in *The Dreme* and *The Complaynt*, were not very elevated. At the beginning he was not even the king's tutor; that office was held by Gawin Dunbar, afterwards Archbishop of Glasgow and Lord Chancellor of Scotland. Lindsay meantime played the part of a kind of dry-nurse, charged with the task of keeping his master amused and attending to his childish wants. The offices he filled, as enumerated by himself in the *Epistil to the Kingis Grace* prefixed to *The Dreme*, were those of sewer, cupbearer, carver, usher, "secreit thesaurare," and "cheiffe cubiculare." He performed most of the services of a maid:

[1] *Rerum Scot. Hist.* xiii. 31.

"Quhen thow wes young, I bure thee in myne arme
Full tenderlie, tyll thow begouth to gang;
And in thy bed oft happit thee full warme,
With lute in hand, syne, sweitlie to thee sang:
Sumtyme, in dansing, feiralie I flang;
And sumtyme, playand farsis on the flure;
And sumtyme, on myne office takkand cure.

"And sumtyme, lyke ane feind, transfigurate,
And sumtyme, like the greislie gaist of Gye;
In divers forms oft tymes disfigurate,
And sumtyme, dissagyist full plesandlye.
So, sen thy birth I have continewalye
Bene occupyit, and aye to thy plesoure,
And sumtyme, Seware, Coppare, and Carvoure."

These functions are to modern taste sufficiently incongruous with the position of Lindsay by birth and education; but menial services to royalty long stood in fact, and still stand in the language of court etiquette, on a special footing. It is interesting to notice that the future poet was the prince's minstrel, and the future dramatist was in a humble way court actor. His name first figures in the Treasurer's accounts for materials "to be a play coat to David Lyndsay for the play, playit in the king and quenis presence in the Abbey of Holyrood."[1] As James passed from infancy into boyhood the character of Lindsay's entertainment had to change. Popular legends, the prophecies of the Rhymer, Bede, and Merlin, the histories of the leading mediaeval heroes, and the stories of Chaucer and Lydgate, furnished him with materials for the narratives which took the place of the earlier farcical shows.

About 1522 Lindsay married a lady named Janet Douglas; but this event does not appear to have changed

[1] Quoted in Laing's Memoir of Lindsay.

the tenor of his life. Some two years later occurred the revolution known as the "Erection" of King James, which entirely changed the condition and prospects both internal and external of Scotland. The Regent Albany had been the consistent champion of French influence; but the now dominant Douglases were of the English faction. Lindsay more than once prays that Scotland may never again be afflicted with the miseries of a minority, and what he saw in the early years of James V. gave ample ground for his dread. The boy-king was nothing more than a piece in the hands of unscrupulous players; and foreign influences intensified the evils of domestic jealousies. The party installed in power by this event retained their seat for four years. James, nominally supreme, was really a prisoner in the hands of Angus. But in 1528 the king escaped from Falkland to Stirling, a counter-revolution was effected, and the Douglas rule was at an end; for James, once free from the tutorship of Angus, pursued him and all his house with relentless hostility.

The Erection drove Lindsay from the court into retirement; but though he was deposed from his place, he was not personally ill-treated at this crisis. His pension was not cut off, and his wife continued to hold a subordinate office in the royal household. It was apparently in this enforced leisure that Lindsay began to write. His earliest known poem is *The Dreme*, which must have been composed soon after the overthrow of Angus. In it Lindsay struck at once the notes which characterised his work throughout; and though his satire deepened in his later pieces, he never afterwards reached a higher poetic level. *The Dreme* was evidently composed with

the double object of bringing before James the evils under which his country was suffering and reminding him that the writer, unlike his fellow-labourer Gawin Dunbar, was still unrewarded for his services; for the pension which he drew was too small to be regarded as a full recompense. But the latter object is with honourable dignity kept in the background. In the prefatory *Epistil*, after reminding the king of his youth spent in the royal service, for which, he says, "hope hes me hecht ane gudlie recompense," he passes on with the usual apology for the absence of "ornate termis" to the *Prolog* to the poem proper. This prologue is one of the few passages in Lindsay that can be fairly reckoned poetical. He narrates how after a sleepless night he walked out on a January morning to the shore. The winter landscape is painted with much feeling—the branches bared by the blast, the snow and sleet "perturbing" all the air, the flowers "under dame Naturis mantyll lurking law," and the birds mourning the absence of summer. The poet reaches the sea, and after pacing for a while up and down on the sand, he takes refuge in a little cave in a cliff, where, musing on the resemblance between the unstable world and the restless waves, he is thrown into the conventional sleep and sees the conventional vision. The machinery of the poem is thus anything but original. The vision is a device worn threadbare in our older poets, and in Lindsay there is the additional improbability of incongruent circumstances. But to atone for this he carries us away from the hackneyed May morning to a fresh scene, and suits his landscape to the complexion of his thoughts if not to the plan of his poem.

While the poet sleeps, a lady who calls herself Dame Remembrance appears before him, and sinks down with him through the earth, "into the lawest Hell." Here Lindsay's preferences begin to peep out. The place of torment is peopled by all sorts and conditions of men, but especially by Churchmen of every description, who are there because of covetousness, lust, and ambition, and because they did not instruct the ignorant by preaching. But above all, here as elsewhere, Lindsay dwells upon temporal wealth as the great source of corruption in the Church. The Emperor Constantine is the fountain and spring of all the evil. As yet however, notwithstanding his clear vision of abuses, Lindsay has no fault to find with the doctrines of the Church. He proclaims his belief "that the trew Kirk can no way erre at all." He has a special class of sufferers for neglect of the confessional. He seats the "Quene of Quenis" next the throne of God. He even accepts, though unwillingly, the doctrine of purgatory, because it rests on the authority of "gret clerkis"; but the stanza in which he expresses this belief concludes significantly —"Quhowbeit my hope standis most in Cristis blude." It is notable that this doctrine of purgatory, which Lindsay bows to against his own judgment, was, according to Knox, one of the "trifles" for which Patrick Hamilton suffered; and that among the "matters of greater importance" dealt with in Hamilton's treatise was that of the atonement just hinted at by Lindsay.

Passing from this pit of despair the poet and his guide ascend through purgatory, the limbo of unbaptised babes, and that of pre-Christian mankind. These they

leave behind with a speed which marks Lindsay's dislike of the doctrines, and rise through the nine spheres of the old astronomers to heaven itself. But this starry flight is somewhat purposeless. Without learning, or at least without revealing, anything very striking, they descend again to a point from which the whole earth is visible at once. After a rapid description of the world in accordance with mediaeval cosmography the poet fixes his gaze upon Scotland; and here we come upon the kernel and discover the purpose of the poem. It is a political essay meant for the instruction and guidance of James. The poet from his height views the realm of Scotland with her "fructuall" mountains, lusty vales, rich rivers, her abundant game and store of metals, her people fair, able, strong to endure great deeds—everything that ought to create wealth, and yet all producing only poverty. Daime Remembrance assures him that the cause of all the unhappiness is "wanting of justice, polycie, and peace," and that they who are to blame for this want are the nobles. This conclusion is driven home by the appearance of John the Commounweill, a character very familiar to the readers of Lindsay :—

"And thus as we were talking, to and fro,
We saw a bousteous berne cum ouir the bent,
Bot hors, on fute, als fast as he mycht go,
Quhose rayment wes all raggit, revin, and rent;
With visage leyne, as he had fastit Lent:
And fordwart fast, his wayis he did advance,
With ane rycht melancolious countynance."[1]

[1] Cf. the picture in *The Complaynt of Scotland* of the third son of Dame Scotia.

He is leaving the country, "for Policye is fled again in France," and Justice is almost blind. In the Border there is nothing but theft and murder; in the Highlands and Islands, thriftlessness, poverty, and disorder; while greed and self-seeking have made the Lowlands as bad. There is no redress to be had, therefore he departs to return no more till he sees the country guided "be wysedom of ane gude auld prudent Kyng." Here the vision comes to an end. A ship running into the bay fires her cannon and lets down sails and anchor with crash and clatter, and the poet awakes.

Such is Lindsay on his first appearance in the field of letters, and such he remains to the end. There is more poetic promise than is quite redeemed in later years; but the vigorous sense and the manly courage which dares to utter the truth about the most powerful, qualities which make Lindsay respectable even at his lowest, grow with time. He at once points to the nobles and priests as the source of all the evils under which Scotland was suffering, and he never after hesitates or falters. There is always a purpose in Lindsay's verse, and that purpose is reform. The emphasis falls somewhat differently in later days, when the misdeeds of the nobles have lost the prominence which the rise and fall of Angus had given to them at this moment, when it has become more evident that the priesthood is the real "plague spot and embossed carbuncle" of the State, and when the hope of reform from within the Church has faded away. But however the parts they play may vary in relative importance, the characters upon Lindsay's stage are always the same. No man ever held to his purpose more faithfully than he.

When next Lindsay wrote, self had a larger place in his thoughts. Already in *The Dreme* his youth is "neir ouer blawin"; and when that poem passed, like his previous services, unrewarded, he seems to have felt the necessity of speaking out. He does so in *The Complaynt to the Kingis Grace* with bold honesty. It is a vigorous piece of octosyllabic verse, recounting again the personal services mentioned already in *The Dreme*, touching upon the same evils in the State, and more especially those connected with religion, but entering into most detail with regard to the Douglas usurpation. The poet was not sparing in his condemnation of it. Without stopping to weigh the risk of offending James, who was still only a boy, Lindsay, in some of the most rapid and forcible lines he ever wrote, denounced the wickedness of taking a mere child from the schools to put in his hands the government of the country, and the selfishness of the nobles in afterwards playing upon his passions and tempting him to vice. His indignation was fired at once by love of his country, and by personal affection for the prince who had grown up under his hands. He evidently regarded James as a boy of promise, and his anger was all the hotter when he saw that promise blasted for the selfish ends of the nobles. This sincerity of passion lifts *The Complaynt* above the level of begging poems. Most writers who have attempted such subjects have soiled their fingers with them; but Lindsay rises in personal character, if not in reputation as a poet. It was impossible for him to be self-centred, and there is in every line evidence of the truth of his own assertion that he was still without preferment only because he would not beg.

*The Complaynt* speedily bore fruit. In the same year in which it was given to the public (apparently 1529), Lindsay was knighted and made Lyon King of Arms. The appointment was one which changed the course of his life. Hitherto his position had been subordinate; now he became for many important purposes representative of the sovereign. An elaborate Register of Arms of the noble families of Scotland, executed under his direction and guidance, and finished in 1542, exists to prove that he was not a mere holiday herald; and the quality of the work is said to be creditable to those employed upon it. But besides performing tasks of this kind at home, Lindsay, as chief herald, was called upon from time to time to appear at foreign courts; and perhaps it was these later travels that gave rise to the unsupported story of his youthful wanderings. He is known to have been in Flanders in 1531, engaged upon the business of renewing a commercial treaty with the Netherlands; and once more in 1536 he was in France to help in arranging a marriage for James. At home one of his functions was to superintend State ceremonials; and perhaps his familiarity with scenic effects both in his youth and his mature years had something to do in determining the character of his most important work.

During those years Lindsay was far from idle with his pen. The first of his writings after his appointment as Lyon King was the curious piece entitled *The Testament and Complaynt of the Papyngo* (parrot). It is furnished as usual with an apologetic prologue, in which the poet complains that all poetic matter has been exhausted by his predecessors—"the poleit termes are pullit everilk one." This discloses the secret of the great vice of poetic style

in that age. The poet must find or invent "terms rethory-call," "aureait," "poleit," and in straining after them he floods the language with ill-considered and incongruous foreign importations. Lindsay was by no means the only or the chief offender in this way: the mediocrity of his poetic power and the backbone of substance in all his works combined to save him from the flaw which sometimes fatally mars the verse of greater writers; but his adoption of this style whenever his theme admitted, shows that he was as deeply imbued as any with the false taste which it indicates. But the chief interest of the prologue lies in the sketch it furnishes of the state of poetry in Scotland at the time and shortly before. It gives a long list of the names of poets, living and dead, mentioning among the latter most of those whose names appear in Dunbar's *Lament for the Makaris*. The majority of them are mere shades; their works are either entirely lost or exist only in unimportant fragments; but the roll at least affords evidence that there was at that time a great deal of poetic activity about the Scottish court, and a considerable body, if not a high quality of work. Further, a careful examination, with reference to existing fragments, of the terms in which Lindsay refers to his fellow bards, rouses respect for his critical faculty. His allusions are not all as laudatory as they seem: it is possible to detect innuendo and sly hints at weaknesses under the guise of praise. A few years after *The Complaynt of the Papyngo* was written, another name, that of King James himself, would certainly have been added to the list. In an interesting little piece, written probably about 1536, Lindsay addresses him as "Prince of Poetry," "of flowand Rethorick the Flour," and master of

"ornate meter." This is in answer to the King's *Flyting;* and though these flattering phrases may refer only to this lost *Flyting*, an example of a coarse and far from elevated species of composition extremely common in those days, they are still notable as proving that however the claims of James V. to *Christ's Kirk on the Green* and *The Gaberlunzie Man* may be settled, he, like so many others of his house, showed a taste for letters.

In *The Complaynt of the Papyngo* Lindsay puts into the mouth of the king's parrot those criticisms of Church and State which he had already expressed less fully in his own name. The satire derives some piquancy from the plan of the poem, a plan which Lindsay simply adopts from his predecessors. It is a plan condemned by critics; but criticism has not killed *The Hind and the Panther;* and incongruities which can be overlooked in Dryden are still more pardonable in a writer of the sixteenth century.

Lindsay's parrot, though "rycht fat and nocht weill usit to flee," attempts to climb a tall tree, but falls and is impaled upon a stake. In that condition she addresses two epistles, one to the king, the other to her brethren at court. The former contains much good advice strongly though respectfully put. Plain speaking to the Crown was not as rare in Scotland as it was in England, where from an early period the powers of the sovereign were greater. Still, neither in Scotland nor anywhere else have there been many who, filling a position like Lindsay's, have spoken as openly as he did. Those who have least disguised their opinions have generally been either men somewhat removed from court, or men supported there

by a power which had to be respected. Lindsay, on the other hand, had no power except such as the king chose to give him; and all his hopes were centred in royalty. In such circumstances his fearless honesty in addressing a young, self-willed, half-spoilt king was alike honourable to him and to James. Personal affection on both sides probably goes far to explain it. Nor does the long delay in promotion prove any want of regard on the part of the king; for promotion came almost as soon as James was his own master.

The second epistle, still more than the first, is eloquent of the danger which threatens the poet who is too much engrossed with a purpose other than artistic. This epistle points the moral, so often handled in the Middle Ages, of the Falls of Princes; and to do so reviews in most prosaic style the history of Scotland. One of the besetting sins of Lindsay was that he had little artistic sense, and hardly any notion of the necessity of selection. *Quicquid agunt homines* has been at all times the subject of satirists; but few have attempted as persistently as he to mix the whole of their material in the farrago of a single piece. Both epistles however must be regarded as merely preliminary. The poet has relieved his soul for the time of one of its constant burdens, the sense of evils actual or threatening in the State; and he now turns to that which is at present and for ever nearest his heart, the condition of the Church. In his own *Complaynt* he had congratulated the king that there was nothing

> "Withoute gude ordour in this land,
> Except the Spiritualitie."

With reason, therefore, he might now have passed over

temporal affairs; and not without cause is he dull in the treatment of them.

When, in the last and longest section of *The Complaynt of the Papyngo*, Lindsay turns to the consideration of matters spiritual, the interest deepens and the style entirely changes. We rise above the atmosphere of respectable commonplace to a region in which abundance of matter and warm present interest give a glow and fire to each phrase. In the earlier parts of this *Complaynt* the poet simply utters his own sentiments through an uncouth medium. Now the resources of the plan are developed with considerable ingenuity. Seeing the Papyngo in pain the Pye, the Raven, and the Gled (Kite) come near to shrive her. The Pye proclaims himself

> "One Channoun regulare,
> And of my brether Pryour principall:
> My quhyte rocket, my clene lyfe doith declare;
> The blak bene of the deith memoriall:
> Quharefore, I thynk your gudis naturall
> Sulde be submyttit hole into my cure;
> Ye knaw I am ane holye creature."

But the Papyngo is not easy in mind—

> "Father, be the rude,
> Howbeit your rayment be religious lyke,
> Your conscience, I suspect, be nocht gude;
> I did persave, quhen prevelye ye did pyke
> Ane chekin from ane hen, under ane dyke.
> I grant, said he, that hen wes my gude freind,
> And I that chekin tuke, bot for my teind."

The Papyngo remaining unconvinced expounds to the Pye and his brethren the Raven (a black monk), and the Gled (a holy friar), the cause of her suspicions and the origin of corruption in the Church. Again the

satirist reverts to Constantine. Corruption begins when the Church espouses Property and so begets Riches and Sensuality. These banish Chastity and Devotion. The former is traced in her exile through Italy, France, and England, everywhere rejected and cast out. Her fate is no better in Scotland. She is ousted by one religious order after another until she finds refuge upon the Borough Muir. It is pleasant to notice that the satirist of abuses has still a word of praise for pure life and unfeigned devotion—

> "Quhare bene scho now, than said the gredy Gled?
> Nocht amang yow, said scho, I yow assure:
> I traist scho bene upon the Borrow-mure,
> Besouth Edinburgh, and that rycht mony menis,
> Profest amang the Systeris of the Schenis."

At last the Papyngo lies at the brink of death. She shrives herself to the Gled, and bequeaths her various possessions to those who seem to need them most; but she is no sooner dead than her executors, disregarding her bequests, fall to quarrelling over her remains, until in the end the Gled flies away with what is left—

> "The lave, with all thair mycht,
> To chace the Gled, flew all out of my sycht."

So far as the chronology of Lindsay's poems can be fixed, there is a gap of several years between *The Complaynt of the Papyngo* and the piece which follows next. As there is no known reason why he should have ceased to write, the existence of the gap may fairly be advanced as a ground for suspecting that he was already engaged upon *The Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis;* but setting aside for the present the disputed question of the date of this

work, it appears that for the next eight or nine years Lindsay is represented only by a few fugitive pieces. In one of these, *Kittei's Confessioun*, his favourite note of satire against the Church is repeated, with special reference to auricular confession. In another, the *Supplicatioun in Contemptioun of Syde Taillis*, the invective is directed against female luxury in dress, a subject as old as the lament for the decline of manly strength. There are besides one or two pieces connected with public events. From his reputation as a poet, his familiarity with all that related to the king, and the general nature of his duties as a herald, Lindsay might naturally be expected to perform some of those functions which fall to a Poet Laureate. One specimen of such handiwork exists in the *Deploratioun of the Deith of Quene Magdalene. The Justing betuix James Watsoun and Jhone Barbour*, widely different as it is, may perhaps be regarded as another. It celebrates a mock tournament which formed part of the rejoicings over the arrival of the successor to Queen Magdalen.

Those years, so unproductive of poetic fruit, were also historically uneventful. There were the usual troubles with England, settled for the time by the peace of 1534; and the usual negotiations with France culminating in the two successive French marriages, the latter of which was destined to bring in its train momentous consequences. The movement against the priesthood and the religious orders was meanwhile going on under the surface. Some of its effects show themselves in the persecutions of 1539, when five heretics were burnt and a number, among whom was Buchanan, driven into exile.

These persecutions however mark, not the steady policy of James, but a mysterious change which passed over it. Just before the persecution he had been roused to indignation against the Franciscan friars because he believed them to be implicated in certain obscure cases of treason which had lately occurred.[1] But the Church authorities had found means to change the king's policy; his instruments were given up to their vengeance, and the true faith was saved for the time from the assaults of its critics.

It is remarkable that Lindsay, the unsparing satirist of the Church, escaped persecution, not on this occasion only but in after years as well; and the cause of his life-long immunity has been the subject of much debate. It has been suggested that the explanation is to be found in the king's friendship for him; or, again, that Lindsay's character as a patriotic Scot protected him. Neither explanation is sufficient; not the former, because the phenomenon to be accounted for continued long after the death of the king. Lindsay lived through the ascendency of Cardinal Beaton and under the shadow of Mary of Guise as unscathed as he had lived beneath the shield of James. Still less is the second explanation satisfactory. Religious zeal has seldom "stood on ceremonies" in dealing with opponents, and insular patriotism was the last quality in the world to stay the hand of the cosmopolitan dignitaries of the Church of Rome. Possibly the influence of England helped to protect Lindsay after the death of James. The party of reform was compelled by the force of circumstances to look to Henry

[1] Buchanan, Dedication of *Franciscanus*.

VIII. for support; and their imperious patron was little likely to suffer a *protégé* to be harmed. This conjecture at least agrees with the known facts. Lindsay's position brought him into intimate connection with the English representatives at court, so that he was not beyond the reach of their arm; and *The Tragedie of the Cardinall* proves that, whether on private or public grounds or a combination of both, Lindsay within a few years after the death of James was entirely English in his sympathies; and this in face of the fact that the lofty pretensions of Henry towards the close of James's reign did much to alienate the Scotch. Lindsay's life did not extend far enough into the reign of the English Mary to show what effect that change might have produced.

Just after this persecution of 1539 Lindsay is believed to have produced the most curious and on the whole the greatest of his works, the morality entitled *The Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis.* Little need be said by way of introduction to it. The historian of Elizabethan literature must inquire into the origin of the English drama; and facts in themselves trivial acquire importance from their relation to the works of Marlowe and Shakespeare and Jonson; but in Scotland the drama never had a history. Lindsay's *Satyre* contains the promise of better things to come, but the promise was never redeemed; and in consequence such minute facts as are known with regard to early dramatic exhibitions remain minute and unimportant. Before Lindsay the Scottish drama was very rudimentary, and it remained undeveloped after his day. By a singular irony of fate this was caused by the triumph of the very movement in support of which chiefly *The Satyre of the*

*Thrie Estaitis* was written. The Reformation stamped out the spark of dramatic activity in Scotland, as it would have done in England had the Puritan party risen to power half a century earlier than it did. Had there ever been an English Knox, would there have been a Shakespeare? A comparison of the literary history of the two countries points to a negative answer.

So far as there were precedents in Scotland for dramatic composition, they were of the same class as we find in England, and they followed the same line of development. Courtly pageants were a favourite amusement of James IV.; and Lindsay himself was employed not only, as has been already pointed out, in the humble task of devising scenes to amuse the infant prince, but in the more ambitious exhibitions before the courtiers. The same taste for scenic effects continued through the reign of James V.; and Lindsay was again employed to superintend the spectacles for the welcome of Mary of Guise. In the reign of Queen Mary such shows incurred the hostility of the ministers; but they were not given up without a sharp struggle. The unruly mob of Edinburgh loved the Abbot of Unreason and Robin Hood more than they feared the pains of hell; and some time passed before such revels ceased.

There were other shows of a more regular description. In 1440 a play called *The Halie Blude* was acted at Aberdeen; and the fragment called *The Droichis Part of the Play*, which, occurring in the Asloane MS., must be at least as old as the reign of James IV., proves the existence of other dramatic pieces. Lindsay's own time produced several dramatic compositions. His *Satyre* alone has survived; but it is significant that the other plays of which any notice

remains dealt with the same subject. One of the victims of the persecution of 1539 was a man named Kyllor, a Dominican friar, whose offence was that he had written a mystery on the Passion in which he denounced the vices of the clergy. His boldness cost him his life. James Wedderburn of Dundee took the same means of proclaiming his views, and was obliged to seek refuge in France. His plays were a tragedy on the beheading of John the Baptist, and a comedy on the story of Dionysius the Tyrant, in both of which, according to Calderwood,[1] he "carped roughlie" and "nipped" the Papists. He further offended by "counterfooting the conjuring of a ghaist."

It has been already hinted that there is difficulty as to the date of *The Satyre of the Three Estaitis*. Some place it in 1535, others in 1540. Chalmers somewhat dogmatically asserts, on the authority of internal evidence, that it was finished in 1535 and first acted on the playfield at Cupar in Fife in that year. Laing, taking the safer course of confining himself to ascertained facts, pronounces, perhaps also a little too confidently, that "it was first exhibited at Linlithgow at the feast of Epiphany on 6th January $15\frac{39}{40}$." This is undeniably the earliest exhibition which can be established by positive evidence. But if it is ever justifiable to draw an inference from the spirit and general method of an author, we may conclude as Chalmers does that the central figure of the *Satyre* is no other than James V. Certainly it could be no other real person, and almost as certainly it was no mere figment of the poet's brain. The subject of the *Satyre* is the condition of Scotland, which had been for over twenty years dependent

[1] Calderwood, i. 142 (Wodrow Ed.).

upon James and his fate. And the picture of Rex Humanitas—young, inexperienced, praying for guidance in his reign, full of good impulses but without the knowledge to enable him to choose between good and evil, and falling immediately into the hands of Wantonness and Sensuality—must have been to Lindsay's mind an exact transcript of James's youth. If so, the *Satyre* must have been written before the marriage of James on the 1st January, 1537. The force of the argument that if the reference had been to James the play must have been changed in subsequent representations is not very apparent. A poet is not bound to follow the changes in the history of the person he had in his mind in creating a character. To this must be added the argument already advanced that, dated at 1535, the *Satyre* fills satisfactorily an interval in the poet's life otherwise seemingly fruitless; for it is doubtful whether any other piece can be put between the years 1530 and 1536.

*The Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* is a morality, with the usual mixture of concrete human beings and allegorical impersonations of virtues and vices. It is, like all such compositions, long, rambling, and loosely constructed; but by general consent Lindsay's play, for its vigour and point and sound sense, takes the place of honour in its class. It is less abstract and has more human interest than moralities generally possess: there is interest in the constant reference to the pressing topics of the time; and there is a wealth of unpolished humour which only wants compression to be effective. The characters who appear upon the stage are of very various merit. Some of them are lifeless enough, particularly such personages as Correctioun and the virtues generally; but, on the other hand, there is a

certain class of the allegorical figures which in a humbler degree have the same merit as Bunyan's, and for similar reasons. Falset, Dissait, and Flattrie are clothed with flesh and blood because Lindsay was profoundly conscious of the evils against which he directed his satire: they are actual existences to him just as sin and Christian grace are to Bunyan. He is successful in the critical and satirical part: he fails in the suggestions for reconstruction, because he did not realise the way to cure the body politic as vividly as he realised the diseases under which it was suffering.

The body of the *Satyre* is divided into two parts; but, so far as its structure can be made out from the authorities upon which the text rests,[1] there are besides two interludes connected with it, one introductory, the other intended to fill the gap between the two parts and to amuse the common throng in the interval while the principal auditors were absent from their places. The play is coarse, the interludes are coarser; but that of *The Puir Man and the Pardoner* is good enough to demand notice. As elsewhere in his works, now with humour sly or broad, now with downright denunciation, Lindsay delights to scorch and flay, to crush and pulverise "religious men" of all classes connected with the Church of Rome; so he utilises the pause between the two parts of *The Satyre* to emphasise with scathing sarcasm his conviction that all evil is centred in the Church. The Pardoner, Sir Robert Rome-Raker,

[1] These are two: (1) The Bannatyne MS., in which are embodied a series of interludes taken from Lindsay's satire; but the grave matter is professedly left out. (2) The printed edition of 1602, which must be the foundation of every modern text. The Bannatyne MS., however, though it omits much, also contains matter which does not appear in the later version.

enters crying his wares and consigning to the powers of evil "this unsell wickit New Testament" and its translators, Luther and his crew, St. Paul and his books. He has a whole pack of treasures:—

"My patent Pardouns, ye ma se,
Cum frae the Cane of Tartarie,
Weill seald with oster schellis.
Thocht ye have na contritioun,
Ye sall have full remissioun,
With help of buiks and bellis.
Heir is ane relict, lang and braid,
Of Fine Maccoull the richt chaft blaid
With teith, and al togidder:
Of Colling's cow, heir is ane horne,
For eating of Makconnal's corne,
Was slane into Balquhidder.
Heir is ane coird, baith great and lang,
Quhilk hangit Johne the Armistrang:
Of gude hemp soft, and sound:
Gude, halie peopill, I stand for'd
Quha ever beis hangit with this cord,
Neids never to be dround.
The culum of Sanct Brydis kow,
The gruntill of Sanct Antonis sow,
Quhilk buir his haly bell;
Quha ever he be heiris this bell clinck,
Gif me ane ducat for till drink,
He sall never gang to hell,
Without he be of Baliell borne:
Maisters, trow ye, that this be scorne!
Cum win this Pardoun, cum."

In the first part of *The Satyre* proper the note is struck in the character of Rex Humanitas—a king of noble aspirations falling at the threshold of his career under the sway of evil counsellors and plastic as wax in their hands. Dissait and his fellows, with the ready aid of

the Estate Spiritual, put Chastitie and Veritie in the stocks and Vice reigns triumphant. Then enters the *deus ex machina*, Divyne Correctioun. The Virtues are set free, the Vices put to flight; Sensualitie finds refuge and welcome with her friends the spiritual lords; the King is roused from his dreams of luxury and license; and the way is thus prepared for part second. It is remarkable that even at this early date Lindsay seems to have felt it necessary to guard against the excess of reforming zeal. He is the enemy of vice, not of innocent pleasure; and he puts into the mouth of Solace a request readily granted by Divyne Correctioun, to

> "Give us leave to sing,
> To dance, to play at chesse, and tabills,
> To reid stories, and mirrie fabils,
> For pleasure of our King."

This first part is preliminary. It shows reform begun in high places; but the Three Estates are still to be reduced to order. In the second part, summoned by Diligence, they come upon the stage backwards, led by their Vices; the Spiritual Estate by Covitice and Sensualitie, the temporal lords by Publick Oppressioun, the Commons by Falset and Dissait. When they are challenged for their singular demeanour, Spiritualitie justifies it on the plea that they have gone so for many a year and are very well satisfied to go so still; and when the Vices are led away to the stocks, those of Spiritualitie take a touchingly tender farewell of their superior, assuring him that though they must depart their spirit will remain with him. This over, the reform of abuses proceeds. The temporal lords and the commons, accepting the changes

demanded, are soon disposed of. Very different is the attitude of Spiritualitie. "Auld use and wont" covers every corruption—

> "Wee will want nathing that wee have in use,
> Kirtit nor kow, teind lambe, teind gryse, nor guse."

It is needless to go over the ground again. The subjects of complaint are the old familiar themes—the lust, the greed, the ignorance of the religious orders. If the satirist's charges of ignorance seem overdrawn they should be read along with the sober assertion of Knox, that some of the friars thought the New Testament a book written by Martin Luther. The Reformer was unquestionably a deeply prejudiced man, but he was truthful; and he is supported on this point by Buchanan. Johne the Commoun-weill suggests with reason that if King David, the "sair sanct," were living he would repent of his liberality to the Church. The play ends with the passing of a number of wholesome acts and the punishment of the wicked, wherein the representatives of the Spiritual Estate suffer so severely that their very vices will acknowledge them no more.

For some years Lindsay must have been much engaged upon the great Register of Arms. Towards the close of 1542, the year in which it was completed, events occurred which might well have turned the Lyon King's mind from poetry. The life of James V. closed in gloom and disaster. His successor was an infant a few days old; and Lindsay saw that his declining years must be passed, as his early manhood had been passed, amidst the disorders of a long minority, the very evil against which he had most earnestly prayed and which

had worked more ruin in Scotland than anything else. He saw all his fears realised—factions, disputes, and struggles for power internally; externally intrigues with France on the one hand and with England on the other; confusion ever growing worse confounded. The death of James diminished Lindsay's influence. He was estranged from the Court, without however losing his office; and for two years there is no trace of him in connexion with any important events. In 1544 he was abroad as chief herald delivering the insignia of the various foreign orders with which James had been decorated. After his return he sat in parliament; but the first events which find expression in his poetry are again events connected with the state of religion. In 1543 began those acts of religious vandalism which have made the name of the Reformers odious to the lovers of art. In Dundee especially the kirks suffered. This movement, which connects itself particularly with the name of Wishart, lasted until the party of reform was temporarily crushed by the capture of the castle of St. Andrews and the imprisonment in the galleys of the ringleaders in the assassination of Cardinal Beaton. Lindsay was sympathetic, and he was one of those who joined in calling Knox to the office of a preacher; but he was not of the party in the castle.

He made use of Beaton however to point a moral in *The Tragedie of the Cardinall.* It is excessively dull. A keen search would be needed to discover a single poetic idea or a single powerful line, while the depths of bathos to which Lindsay is always liable to sink could not be better illustrated than by the words in which

he makes the Cardinal refer to the disposal of his own body:—

> "They saltit me, syne closit me in ane kyste.
> I lay unburyit seven monethis and more
> Or I was borne to closter, kirk, or queir,
> In ane mydding, quhilk paine bene tyll deplore."

Knox tells the same story in very similar words, but with a grim humour and satisfaction which give it quite a different point: "Now becaus the wether was hote (for it was in Maij, as ye have heard), and his funerallis could not suddanly be prepared, it was thowght best, to keap him from stynckíng, to geve him great salt ynewcht, a cope of lead, and a nuk in the boddome of the Seatoore (a place where many of Goddis childrene had bene empreasoned befoir), to await what exequeis his brethrene the bischoppes wold prepare for him."[1]

But though the *Tragedie* (the word is used in the pre-Elizabethan sense) is utterly worthless as literature, it is interesting as revealing Lindsay's views regarding one of the most startling events of a stirring time. It does not commit him to absolute approval of the act of the assassins, but it shows his sympathy with them. It shows also his strong adhesion to the English policy. The misfortunes of the Cardinal and of Scotland are traced largely to the triumph of the French party. The abandonment of the proposals for an English marriage and the breach of the "band of peace" are the causes of all the wreck and ruin of the time.

With the affair of Cardinal Beaton the public life of Lindsay draws near a close. In 1548 he was in Den-

[1] *Works*, I. 178.

mark attempting to negotiate a treaty. After that date his name appears in connexion with no business of importance; but he held the office and performed the duties of Lyon King to the end. Except for this the last years of his life, so far as is known, were devoted to literature. Hardly any details of those years have survived. The time, place, and manner of his death are unknown; though the date can be fixed within pretty narrow limits. He was alive on Jan. 16, 1555, and dead before April 18 of that year.[1]

To the declining years of Lindsay's life belong two of his longest works, *The Historie and Testament of Squyer Meldrum*, and *Ane Dialog betuix Experience and ane Courteour*, commonly known as *The Monarchie*. *Squyer Meldrum* is a tale of chivalrous adventure relating the exploits of a personal friend of the poet. Contrary to his custom Lindsay seems to have written this tale mainly for its own sake. He does indeed proclaim an ethical purpose in the opening lines: as other poets have held up the lives of ancient heroes to be mirrors of virtue and courage, so will he recount the deeds of his contemporary. But there is no burning question in his mind, no immediate reform to be aimed at. We miss therefore that which forms the abiding interest of Lindsay's work, its intimate relation to the history and existing circumstances of his country. The absence of this kind of interest would make most of the author's work unreadable; and though the *Historie* is otherwise of much more than average merit, it is on this account less attractive than many a ruder page in his other

[1] See Laing's Memoir.

poems. The story of Squire Meldrum is written, as beseems the subject, in the favourite measure of the old romances. It is of all measures perhaps the easiest to write, up to a certain degree of excellence; and as Lindsay's very moderate powers of rhythm are not strained the octosyllabic lines flow on in a clear and forcible stream. The story is well told: there is less irrelevancy, less redundancy, less false taste than we usually find. But on the other hand no high level is anywhere reached. It is like Scott's poetry, with all the variety of versification, with the colouring, the grace of sentiment, and even with part of the vigour (though Lindsay is vigorous) left out. If, therefore, we accept the view that *The Historie of Squyer Meldrum* is his greatest work, the niche of the Lyon King in literature must be small. But this criticism is possible only if we view Lindsay simply and solely as a versifier. In point of fact he was a reformer as much as Knox was, and a versifier chiefly that he might be a reformer. To ignore this is to leave the man himself out, to criticise him without that sympathy which alone makes criticism of any value.

Very different is the last, the longest, the most profoundly earnest of all his works, *The Monarchie.* Its date is fixed at the year 1553 by a computation of time within the poem itself. Everywhere there are marks that it is the work of an old man whose task is now to learn to die. It is also the work of a weary man whose dearest hopes have been disappointed. More than once Lindsay breaks out in prayer, dignified from its heartfelt earnestness, for purity, for true religion, for all that may lift his country from its miserable condition. For the gloom which hangs

over *The Monarchie* is not a personal and selfish one. The author's desire for himself is summed up in the wish to be at rest. But rest was impossible for Lindsay while the country he had served from boyhood was still torn and rent from within and from without, while the evils against which he had consistently striven were still rampant; and so he lifts his dying voice for the last time in a long protest against abuses, civil and spiritual, against the tyranny of nobles, the pride of prelates, the oppression of power in all its forms. But he is too worn in spirit to wield effectually his favourite weapon, satire. In a dialogue between Experience and a Courtier, in the plainest and directest terms, without trick or artifice, he expounds the causes of the evils of the commonweal. He lays his finger on the disordered pulse of the country, and names the disease.

If Lindsay had been an artist, if he had understood the supreme importance of selection and condensation, *The Monarchie* would have been a great work, not because of poetic talent, but from sheer weight of earnestness. Unfortunately no man ever less comprehended the importance of selection; and in consequence the poem is in great part worthless. No better plan occurs to him than to throw his ideas into the form of a universal history, in which he traces the fortunes of humanity from Adam to the day of doom, and even a little after it. No one cares to hear in his verse the story of the fall, of the flood, of the building of Babel, of the four great monarchies. It is when from time to time he refers to his own country, or when his earnestness for truth almost rises to a cry, that he shows his genuine strength. He is fully himself only where he warns the

tyrant lords and barons that small mercy awaits them at the Judgment, or where he examines the double monarchy, temporal and spiritual, of the Papacy. For more and more as time went on the dispute about religion drew everything else into its vortex, so that men who, like Lindsay, were interested in public affairs, and yet not so immersed in their current as to be drowned in details, fixed their eyes upon this dispute as that the solution of which carried all the rest along with it. As *The Monarchie* is more direct and definite than *The Satyre*, it affords better grounds for forming a judgment as to the exact length to which Lindsay was prepared to go; and with respect to the literary leader of the attack on the Church, it is worth while to come to some conclusion on the point.

Only the prejudice which rages over the debatable ground of religion could so long have blinded multitudes of men to the fact, certain *a priori* and established by ample testimony, that what we call Protestant opinions were the result of growth, not the creation of a moment, the work of a single mind, or the effect of some sudden rush of inspiration. Through the labours of men like Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart the way was prepared for Knox; and Knox himself, not only in his unregenerate youth, but even in the early days of his reforming zeal, accepted many articles of faith and many practices which he afterwards denounced with all the warmth of which language is capable. The same is true of the literary party whose sympathies went with the Reformers. Lindsay is justly ranked as a Reformer. Few indeed of the professional theologians exercised as much influence as he; but his life and death lie before the time when the Reformation

first took shape. Before the signature of the Band of Association of December 3, 1557, which first joined together the body afterwards known as the Lords of the Congregation, reform was a vague aspiration, and sympathy with it might be compatible with much difference of opinion.

Lindsay's position is exceptionally clear. He was never a Reformer in the sense of definitely rejecting the authority of the Papacy; nor had he any objection to prelacy as a form of Church government. It was the abuses which had grown up in the Church of Rome which roused his ire, no theoretic conviction of the unscriptural character of the system. Purity of administration more than change of doctrine was what he demanded. He reiterated again and again the conviction that the temporal sovereignty of the Popes and the wealth of the Church were the prime sources of all the evil. "O Empriour Constantyne," he makes the "religious men" in the place of torment exclaim in *The Dreme*,

> "O Empriour Constantyne,
> We may wyit thy possessioun poysonabyll
> Of all our great punytioun and pyne";

and the note thus struck in the first of Lindsay's poems still sounds in the last. Let the prelates lead chaste lives, be the protectors, not the oppressors of the poor, and do their duty as preachers and teachers of religion: these are his demands.

But besides a willingness to own the authority of the Pope, provided the Pope would abate his high pretensions to temporal supremacy and reform himself and his subordinates, we can detect in Lindsay an acceptance,

either absolute or modified, of other doctrines which were the special abhorrence of the later Scottish Protestants. If he was not prepared to worship the Virgin, he was certainly willing to pay her the most marked reverence, and she was still to him at the end of his life the "virgene quene of quenis." In his views with regard to the use of images he stands half-way between the ultimate theory of the Reformers and the practice of the Catholic Church. He condemns the worship of images or any approach to it, but allows their use as an aid to devotion—

> "Seand the Image of the Rude,
> Men suld remember on the blude."

In other words, he accepts the Catholic theory, while he condemns the abuses which had been suffered to gather round it.

In these respects Lindsay would not have satisfied the later Reformers: on other points he has less of sympathy with the old faith. Questions purely doctrinal, though they are not absent, fill less space in his mind than matters in which sacerdotal usage or tradition infringe upon secular interests or war against public morals. The rapacity and extortion of the clergy, the iniquity of the corse-present, on these themes his wrath is at white heat. Celibacy is condemned in the interests of public morals, pilgrimages chiefly on the same ground. The latter theme Lindsay handles in a way which forcibly recalls *The Holy Fair*. He has not the fine touch of Burns, but the substance of his verse is the same; and it is highly interesting to notice that when the reformed religion itself needed reformation, the new scourge of the Kirk had precisely the same material for satire ready to his hand. From the

fact that some of the Scottish clergy have never forgiven Burns, not for his sins but for his sarcasm on their order,[1] we can form some judgment how the Romish clergy must have hated Lindsay, and must wonder all the more that, armed as they were with fire and sword, they never wreaked their vengeance upon him.

Even when his theme naturally suggested a doctrinal handling, Lindsay loved to view it from the civil side. Thus, Purgatory, which he had previously accepted in submission to the true Kirk, but afterwards definitely rejected, he viewed as the most potent means by which the priests had climbed to greatness. For that reason they had no choice but to hold by it, and for that reason too those who wished to reform them were obliged to wrest it from their grasp. In the same way, Lindsay objected to auricular confession on the ground that the laying bare of the soul to a man whose own mind was dark put in unscrupulous hands an awful power.

It seems evident then that, while Lindsay did not contemplate or desire an absolute breach with the Church of Rome, while his position and policy were far from being the position and policy which ultimately found favour and under which the old order was swept clean away, he did wish and strenuously advocate very radical reforms. He was in spirit a Protestant; but, because he was an early Protestant, he did not present all the features which are visible at a later date. We may be quite certain that, had he lived two or three years longer, he would have been found among the Lords of the Congregation; and, had his days been still further extended, life-long servant

[1] See Shairp's *Burns*.

of the Stuarts though he had been, he would have joined the opposition led by Knox against Mary. The later development of the Scottish Reformation was determined almost as much by the force of circumstances as by deliberate choice. It is puerile to fancy that all the doctrines of Knox were arrived at through an unbiased study of Scripture, and by a clear vision of divine truth. Every man's opinions are largely made for him; they are in the making every day; and Lindsay, had he been in the whirl and strife, would have been led to adopt opinions and advocate measures which to his calmer judgment in his retirement did not seem necessary or expedient.

No elaborate summing-up of Lindsay's work and position is necessary: he has spoken for himself. He was not a great poet; although in a few passages, such as the prologue to *The Dreme* and the prologue to *The Monarchie*, he shows the marks of a poetic mind, imagination was not his strongest faculty. His own words, "I did never sleip on Pernasso," had perhaps a deeper truth than he realised. His work is inartistic, harsh in versification, formless in style, marred by a coarseness which it would be difficult to parallel, impossible to outdo. All attempts to palliate his defects are vain. The appeal to the coarseness of the age is but a partial excuse, and any other is out of the question. The Kirk was not without excuse in putting sternly down exhibitions which admitted of ribaldry and licentiousness such as we find in *The Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*. And yet, the more Lindsay is read, the firmer will be the conviction that all this is external to his work. Despite his faults he still retains a true claim to greatness, namely,

that of being the literary leader in the Reformation of the life and faith of his time.

For this task he was much better equipped than he was to enter into competition for the poetic laurel with his predecessor Dunbar or even with Gavin Douglas. He had the keen humour which has characterised his countrymen from Dunbar to Carlyle. He was a close observer with ample opportunities of knowing all classes; and he had the shrewd sense necessary to sift his experience. He was not deeply learned; but he had a sufficient fund of information to supply him with copious historical and traditionary illustrations whenever he wanted them. The result is such as we might expect. Lindsay's satire is by no means highly polished; but it is a sound serviceable weapon, and it cuts. But to the making of *successful* satire —meaning by this, satire which influences action—there go certain moral qualities as well as intellectual powers; and Lindsay possessed these too. He was a man of singular tenacity of character: what his mind once grasped it held. He was single-minded: only once or twice does he speak for personal advancement, and then he does it with vigour and decision but with dignity. Above all, he had the courage to brave the vengeance of powerful enemies and to hold firm although he saw others suffer for offences less than his. It was by virtue of these qualities that Lindsay became not only the first satirist (in the vernacular) of his time, but a power in the State as well. He carried the torch sometimes when there was no one else to bear it. He was influential with the King. He was persevering. He knew that abuses take a great deal of killing, and he redoubled his blows once and again

until they took effect. He lived to see some of the reforms he had advocated actually carried out and more of them in train: a few years longer and he would have seen all and more than all his aspirations for religion in a fair way of being realised.

While the motives of Lindsay were half political, half theological, there were other versifiers whose inspiration was entirely drawn from hatred of the erring Church of Rome. The most curious literary relic of the age of the Reformation is the astounding collection known as *The Gude and Godly Ballates.*[1] Neither the date nor the authorship of this remarkable book can be regarded as certain. Tradition and several old authorities concur in assigning it to the Wedderburns of Dundee; and though modern criticism has suggested doubt,[2] it is reasonably safe to follow the authority of Calderwood[3] and Row,[4] supported by James Melville's Diary[5] and by the fact that the collection soon after the date of the earliest known edition was popularly spoken of by the name of the Dundee Psalms. No doubt it is of the nature of a miscellany, and other hands than those of the Wedderburns may have contributed to it; but the natural inference from its unbroken association with their name is that their share in it was so great as to make it practically their work.

[1] The full title is worth quoting:—"Ane compendious booke of godly and spirituall songs, collectit out of sundrie partes of the Scripture, with sundrie of other ballates changed out of prophane sanges, for avoyding of sinne and harlotrie, with augmentation of sundrie gude and godly ballates not contained in the first edition."

[2] See Laing's Introduction to *The Gude and Godly Ballates.*

[3] I. 142-3. [4] *Hist.*, p. 6. [5] p. 23, Wodrow.

There were three brothers Wedderburn of Dundee, all of pronounced literary tastes. James, the eldest, has already been mentioned in connexion with the early drama. It is his two younger brothers, John and Robert, who are believed to have been chiefly responsible for *The Gude and Godly Ballates.* John was twice driven into exile on account of religion. On the first occasion he took refuge in Germany, where he was still more deeply tainted with heresy. Calderwood says that he translated many of Luther's hymns and the Psalms into Scottish metre, and also turned a number of loose songs to the purposes of religion. He returned to Scotland after the death of James V. in 1542, but was compelled by Cardinal Beaton to flee to England, where he died in 1556. Robert Wedderburn led a quieter life than his two elder brothers, though he too was not free from trouble of a similar character. He retired into France during the ascendency of Beaton, returned after the death of the Cardinal, succeeded his uncle Robert Barrie as Vicar of Dundee, and, so far as is known, held that office till his death. This fact is advanced as an argument against the common account of his connexion with *The Gude and Godly Ballates;* but in those years of confusion there were many anomalies, and notwithstanding his official position he may have written some of the parodies.

The question of the date is intimately connected with that of the authorship of this collection. If the Wedderburns were the authors we must date its beginnings between the years 1539-46, when they were all objects of suspicion, and when John Wedderburn is expressly stated to have been translating from the German, etc. This

renders the Wedderburns' authorship of *The Ballates* all the more probable; for there is evidence in them of German influence.[1] It is true that the oldest known edition belongs to the year 1578, and that no reference to the book can be discovered earlier than 1570; and it is also true that in the collection as we now have it there are allusions to the great revolution of 1560. But this, far from settling, hardly affects the question. The probability is that *The Gude and Godly Ballates* are scattered over a period of at least twenty years. They would be circulated at first separately as fugitive ballads, and very likely the idea of gathering them together was only an afterthought begotten of their popularity. If so, the absence of early references to them is easily explained: the fugitive pieces of popular poetry are never important enough to attract attention until they are threatening to disappear; and had these *Godly Ballates* dealt with any other subject than religion they might have passed unnoticed and uncollected for generations.

*The Gude and Godly Ballates* is a unique book. It is partly satirical and iconoclastic, partly dogmatic and reconstructive. It seeks at once to attack Popery, and to inculcate the positive doctrines of the Protestants in the way best calculated to appeal to the popular understanding and to dwell in the popular memory. This conjunction of aims accounts for the character of the book. It is prefaced with a short prose statement of some of the most important articles of Protestant faith. But the authors were practical enough to see that rhyme was the only instrument which could overcome the diffi-

[1] See Prof. Mitchell's lecture on "The Wedderburns and their Work."

culty arising from the limited distribution of books; and accordingly the bulk of it is in verse. The Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the effects of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper, are all set forth in metre. After these comes a collection of "spirituall sangis," or hymns, with paraphrases of certain passages of Scripture. These in turn are followed by metrical versions of a number of the Psalms, described as "translated out of *Enchiridion Psalmorum*." The end of the book, by far the most remarkable part, consists of miscellaneous pieces of a lyrical character, many of them parodies of the popular songs of the time.

The earlier parts of the collection call for little special remark beyond a recognition of their importance in their own day. They were a factor in the literary contribution to the settlement of the dispute of the churches. They gave the people something definite to set in the place of the Popery which was attacked, and, above all, they put that something in a portable shape. The hymns are generally translations or paraphrases from the German. From a literary point of view these earlier parts are, as a rule, vigorous, but often heavy and unrhythmical. The parodies are much more interesting, though they are also, to the modern mind, more questionable. They throw a few rays of light on the dark subject of early Scottish songs; and they are in themselves pointed and telling, far beyond anything else that the Wedderburns have left. The reason is partly that a poet of but moderate gifts is helped by having some guide to his imagination; but partly also because the work of criticism and destruction was always that which was best done in those days. Men

lived in a state of moral warfare, and they were most themselves when their hand was raised against their neighbour. This side of their work is however a delicate one to touch upon. Knox, the apostle of all that was highest in the Scottish Reformation, handled the mysteries of the Catholic faith in a manner which no free-thinker with a grain of reverence left in his mind would now permit himself to use; and Buchanan, the embodiment of scholarly taste, saw nothing offensive in such attacks. And what Buchanan and Knox did in Scotland, other leaders did in other countries. The authors of *The Gude and Godly Ballates* sinned in good company; but the fact remains that some of their parodies are unquotable, sometimes for irreverence, in other cases for coarseness. That founded on *Hay, trix, trim goe trix* in particular is a marvellous specimen of riotous and seemingly delighted satire on the sensuality of the Romish priesthood and religious orders. It must have been effective against them, but we may doubt whether it helped in the suppression of "sinne and harlotrie." Blots of this kind have been excused or palliated on the ground that the grossest of the ballads are less gross than much of Lindsay. This is true, but not satisfactory; for, in the first place, Lindsay is indefensible, and, secondly, his grossness occurs in a different context. Byron's *Vision of Judgment* has a right to exist in literature, but not side by side with the services of the Church; and *John Gilpin* would be out of place among *Hymns Ancient and Modern.* The following verses give a good idea of the satiric point of the godly ballates:—

"Of the fals fyre of Purgatorie
Is nocht left in ane sponk;

Thairfoir sayis Gedde, way is me,
Gone is preist, freir, and monk.

"The reik, sa woundir deir, thay solde
For money, gold, and landis;
Quhile halfe the riches on the molde,
Is seasit in thair handis.

"Thay knew na thing bot couetice,
And lufe of paramouris:
Thay lat the soulis burn and bis
Of all thair Foundatouris.

"At corps presence thay wold sing,
For ryches to slokkin the fyre;
Bot all pure folk that had na thing
Was skaldit baine and lyre.

"Zit sat thay heich in Parliament
Lyke Lordis of greit renowne:
Quhill now that the New Testament
Hes it and thame brocht downe.

"And thocht thay fuffe at it, and blaw,
Ay quhile thair bellyis ryue;
The mair thay blaw, full weill thay knaw,
The mair it dois misthryue."

The next piece is founded upon a popular tune mentioned in *The Complaynt of Scotland*, and illustrates the relation between *The Gude and Godly Ballates* and popular poetry:—

"With huntis vp, with huntis vp,
It is now perfite day,
Jesus, our King, is gane in hunting,
Quha lykis to speid thay may.

"Ane cursit fox lay hid in rox
This lang and mony ane day,
Deuouring scheip, quhile he micht creip,
Nane micht him schaip away.

"It did him gude to laip the blude
Of zoung and tender lammis;
Nane culd he mis, for all was his,
The zoung anis with thair dammis.

"The hunter is Christ, that huntis in haist,
The hundis ar Peter and Paull,
The Paip is the foxe, Rome is the rox,
That rubbis vs on the gall.

"That cruell beist, he neuer ceist,
Be his vsurpit power,
Under dispens to get our penneis,
Our saulis to deuoir.

"Quha culd deuyse sic merchandise,
As he had thair to sell,
Onles it war proud Lucifer,
The greit maister of Hell.

"He had to sell the Tantonie bell,
And pardonis thairin was;
Remissioun of sinnis in auld schiep skinnis,
Our saulis to bring from grace.

"With bullis of leid, quhyte wax and reid,
And vther quhylis with grene,
Closit in ane box, this vsit the fox,
Sic peltrie was neuer sene.

"With dispensatiounis and obligatiounis,
According to his law,
He wald dispens, for money from hence,
With thame he neuer saw.

"To curs and ban the sempill pure man,
That had nocht to flé the pane;
Bot quhen he had payit all to ane myte,
He mon be absoluit than.

"To sum, God wot, he gaue tot quot,
And vther sum pluralitie;
Bot first with penneis he mon dispens,
Or ellis it will nocht be.

"Kingis to marie, and sum to tarie,
Sic is his power and micht,
Quha that hes gold, with him will he hold,
Thocht it be contrair all richt.

"O blissit Peter, the fox is ane lier,
Thow knawis weill it is nocht sa,
Quhill at the last, he salbe downe cast,
His peltrie, pardonis, and all."[1]

The difference between the work of Lindsay, as bearing on the Reformation, and that of the Wedderburns is very apparent. Lindsay is more weighty, more sober, more moderate in his criticisms. The Wedderburns frequently exhibit all the excess of parodists. The difference was probably in part one of years. Lindsay was an older man than any of the Wedderburns, his work on the whole of a somewhat earlier date. Partly also it may be ascribed to difference of character. Lindsay's method was the more appropriate for opening the question; that of the Wedderburns was admirably adapted to foster and deepen hostility to the Church of Rome once that hostility had fairly taken root among the people. At an earlier date *The Gude and Godly Ballates* would not only have exposed their authors to the vengeance of the Church, but would have turned the current of popular sympathy in the opposite direction. In both their literary instruments the Reformers were fortunate. The wide and enduring popularity of Sir David Lindsay proves this in the one case; while the countrymen of the political philosopher who said that

[1] The English had also parodies of a like cast. There is one on this very song by John Thorne. See Halliwell, moral play of *Wit and Science.*

who would could make the laws of a country if he might make the songs,[1] will not be disposed to deny the felicity of the idea of enlisting popular poetry on the side of the new doctrines.

[1] Fletcher gives this as a quotation, but in such a way as to adopt the sentiment.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION.

### *GEORGE BUCHANAN.*

BEFORE the year 1890 the only full account of the life of George Buchanan was contained in the laborious but unattractive memoir by David Irving. In that year there appeared a scholarly and admirable biography of the great Latinist by Mr. P. Hume Brown, who by the skill and thoroughness with which he has done his work has laid every student of Buchanan under a deep obligation. This biography is styled, "George Buchanan: Humanist and Reformer"; and was afterwards censured on the ground that there is little in the spirit or works of Buchanan to entitle him to the name of Reformer. The biographer knew better than his critic. If by "reformer" must be understood a person with a new theological system, it is true that Buchanan was none; but if we use the word in a wider sense as indicating the spirit of the man and the nature of his influence, the use of it in this case is amply justified. In the beginning of his life Buchanan was, as will presently appear, a powerful and effective satirist of abuses in religion; at its close he worked in harmony with the then triumphant leaders of the Protestant party; and

some of his principal writings were calculated, either directly from their dealing with religious topics, or indirectly from their bearing upon the cognate questions of politics, to further their principles. In Lindsay and the Wedderburns we hear the voice of literature appealing to the people against the corruptions of the Church of Rome; in Buchanan the appeal is addressed to the world of scholarship. Doubtless Buchanan has other interests besides the interest in purity of religion, and even stronger interests; he is the Erasmus of the Scottish Reformation, while Knox plays the part of the Scottish Luther. But this only means that we must add "humanist" to "reformer," not that we must delete either.

It may be questioned whether there was any man in Britain during the sixteenth century who enjoyed so wide a reputation as George Buchanan. Now, there is probably no Englishman and there is certainly no Scotchman of equal power whose works are so entirely neglected. A vague idea of his personality has survived in his native country. His caustic sayings were of a kind to dwell in the memory; and his connexion with the education of James VI. impressed upon the popular mind some of the more prominent features of his character. His stoical demeanour, unawed by royalty and unbending in the discharge of duty, won the admiration of his countrymen and gave him a place in popular tradition; but how unworthy and degrading that place became is proved by the association of his name with the contemptible and ribald collection of stories entitled *The Witty and Entertaining Exploits of George Buchanan.*

Comparatively few have an intelligent notion of the nature and scope of his works; and the stereotyped criticisms which have passed current from generation to generation are sufficient evidence that some of those few have talked about them rather than read them. His only works which are popularly known by name are the History of Scotland and the paraphrase of the Psalms, regarding the latter of which his biographer Irving wrote in the early part of the present century that it was read in many schools as a text-book of the Latin language. In the present day many of the class of readers to whom Irving refers, and not a few of their teachers, would be unable to say in what language the famous paraphrase was composed.

The chief cause of this oblivion, which affects not only Buchanan, but a vast amount of very respectable talent besides,[1] lies in the language chosen. It restricts the audience at once to those who have a knowledge of Latin; and even of these the majority are too fully occupied with the native masters of the language to have much time to spare for the scholars of the Renaissance. These are men who stand in no organic connexion with any body of literature comparable with the great national literatures of ancient or modern times; and consequently those among them who are really worth study miss it because they lack the support which a great writer derives from his fellows. They may be ransacked for purposes of research, but they are seldom studied from the point of view of literature. The neglect is both intelligible and in most cases perfectly just. But

[1] The *Deliciae Poetarum Scotorum* alone represents a world of forgotten lore and buried power.

Buchanan's case is exceptional. He was a king among his tribe; he lived in a stirring period; and his wide activity was not entirely confined to letters. Persecuted for his attacks on the monastic orders at a time when Catholicism was still the religion of Scotland, actively engaged in the proceedings against Queen Mary, and author of a work which deeply influenced the English opponents of Charles I., his life and writings everywhere touch the most important historical movements.

George Buchanan was born about the beginning of February, 1506, near Killearn, in Stirlingshire. He sprang of a race "magis vetusta quam opulenta." He was one of a family of eight children, who were left by the early death of the father in a condition of extreme poverty. Their mother was a woman of strong character, and she not only succeeded in bringing up all her children, but gave to at least some of them the most liberal education that the age afforded. In the case of George she was assisted by her brother, James Heriot, who, on the strength of the promise which the boy had shown in the schools of the neighbourhood, sent him, in the year 1520, to Paris. But Buchanan's life was never a smooth one. After two years his uncle died; and, pressed by poverty and disease, he returned to his native country. Ill health kept him idle for nearly a year; but in 1523 he joined the forces which Albany had brought from France, and took part in the inglorious expedition which ended in the fruitless siege of Wark Castle. He says he took this step from a desire to learn the military art, and the reason is notable: universal curiosity is one of the features of Buchanan's character. Exposure again brought on illness;

but after an invalid winter we find him in the spring of 1525 at St. Andrews, whither he went to hear John Major, "qui tum ibi dialecticen, aut verius sophisticen, in extrema senectute docebat." Despite the terms of this reference, Major was only about fifty-five years of age at that time, and he survived till 1550.

Not only here, but uniformly, Buchanan sneers at Major, speaking of him in one of his epigrams as "solo cognomine Major."[1] Nevertheless Major was a man of European reputation, and ranked among the first scholars and philosophers of the day. He had been trained at Paris, and afterwards held the position of regent first at Glasgow, then at St. Andrews. At Glasgow he had the honour of teaching Knox, and although he never identified himself with the reformers he considerably influenced the Reformation. On the authority of Scripture and of common morality he freely criticised the grosser abuses of life and doctrine current among the Romish clergy; and these criticisms, which would have been dangerous in another, were submissively accepted from the mouth of a man who was recognised as a faithful son of the Church and one of the most learned of living theologians. Thus it came to pass that Major was made a sort of referee between the two parties—the reformers sheltering themselves under the authority of his name, and the party of the old Church listening with respect to the judgment of their own greatest teacher. But perhaps the very moderation which enabled Major to hold this position is the secret of the dissatisfaction of his fiery pupil Buchanan; and his fidelity to

[1] The words are, however, adopted from Major himself (Hume Brown's Buchanan, p. 71).

scholastic methods, already becoming old-fashioned, was sure to offend an intellect which could never be held by the cobwebs of custom.

In 1526 Buchanan followed Major to Paris. There, apparently in 1529, he began to teach in the College of Ste. Barbe, and has left on record his experiences in the fine elegy, *Quam misera sit conditio docentium literas humaniores Lutetiae.* But notwithstanding poverty and other miseries Buchanan always retained a grateful affection for Paris and always showed a readiness to return thither. Help came to him in his need from a young Scottish nobleman, Gilbert Kennedy, Earl of Cassillis, who was then residing in Paris. He employed Buchanan as his tutor, and retained him in that office for several years.

The date of Buchanan's return to Scotland cannot be precisely determined; but it is certain he was there in the early part of 1536. The state of Scotland had radically changed during his absence. Power had passed from the Douglases into the hands of James V. himself. The religious controversy, stilled since the days of the Lollards of Kyle, had been reopened by Patrick Hamilton; and Lindsay, even if *The Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* was still unwritten, had dealt several hard blows at the lives and teaching of the priesthood. Buchanan was more than ready for this movement. In Paris he had fallen as he says "in flammam Lutheranae sectae"; and he brought with him probably a wider knowledge of the doctrinal matters in dispute than was current in a country where the theology of Major was still the chief study of both parties. He brought with him also as deep a dislike of the monks and their

lives as any one could well feel. His hostility soon found expression in writing. After his return from the Continent he lived for a time in the country with the Earl of Cassillis, and there he wrote the short satire on the Franciscans entitled *Somnium*,[1] the earliest of his attacks upon that order, and also his first appearance in a field which Lindsay had already made his own. But Buchanan's mode of handling his weapons differs as widely from Lindsay's as the audience of the learned differs from the people. Instead of the rude bludgeon style of the vernacular poet, whose literary merit is vigour and whose practical merit is suitability to the purpose in view, we have the polish of the scholar and the delicate touches of the literary artist. The *Somnium* is closely imitated from one of Dunbar's poem's published in Laing's edition under the title of *The Visitation of St. Francis.* In the *Somnium* St. Francis appears to the writer in a dream, bearing the garments of the order, which he bids the dreamer don. The latter objects that they do not fit his shoulders. He who wears them must be servile and shameless, must cheat and wheedle and feign; and after all the cowl seldom reaches heaven—"Vix monachis illic creditur esse locus." Even on earth it is to bishops, not to monks, that monuments are raised and honours paid. The poet concludes by begging of the saint, if he is so concerned for his welfare, to give him rather a mitre—

> "Quilibet hac alius mendicet veste superbus:
> At mihi da mitram, purpureamque togam."

[1] Dedication of *Franciscanus*. This dedication is dated 1564, and speaks of the *Somnium* as composed "ante annos fere triginta."

This piece was only the first of a series which won for Buchanan the persevering hatred of the Franciscans and soon drove him into a long exile. Shortly after he had written it he was called from his retirement to take charge of the education of an illegitimate son of the king, whose baptismal name, James, has led to his being confounded sometimes with his more famous half-brother James Stuart, afterwards Earl of Murray. At court Buchanan found that the fame of the *Somnium* had preceded him. The Franciscans were attempting to poison all ears against him; but James had his own reasons for looking with a favourable eye on their critic, and instead of administering a rebuke he promptly urged Buchanan to write a sharper satire against them.[1] The result of this request was the *Palinodia*, which is printed in two parts at the end of the *Fratres Fraterrimi*. His own account of the matter is that being at once unwilling to offend the king and afraid to provoke further the anger of the Franciscans, he wrote a poem so ambiguous that it could be read either favourably or unfavourably; but the only result of his ingenuity was that he displeased both parties, and was required by the King to apply *stimuli* "qui non modo summam perstringerent cutem, sed in intima usque praecordia penetrarent"; and thus he was led on to write the *Franciscanus*.

Such is the account of the origin of those great satires given in the Dedication of the *Franciscanus* to the Earl of Murray. It is repeated with little variation in the *Vita;* and critic after critic has with admirable docility accepted it as a simple statement of fact. But

[1]Dedication of *Franciscanus*.

in view of the character of the *Palinodia* it is absolutely impossible to regard the narrative as anything but irony[1]; to take it literally is to cast a slur upon the intelligence of James. If in the *Somnium* the poet chastised his enemies with whips, in the *Palinodia* he chastises them with scorpions. There is no reason whatever to doubt the statement that it was also at the King's request that the *Franciscanus* was begun; but probably it was his delight in the *Palinodia*, not his dissatisfaction with it, that caused him to wish for more from the same pen. At the King's command then Buchanan again began to write. He submitted his work, still unfinished, to James; but in fear of the enmity of the Franciscans, who were already sufficiently hostile, he refrained from divulging it to anyone else. The precaution was vain. Buchanan fell a victim to the persecution of 1539. He was thrown into prison, but escaped through the window when his guards were asleep.[2] The story even as it stands without comment in Buchanan's History is far from creditable to James. He had urged Buchanan on against the Franciscans when he himself was hostile to them; but the moment his policy changed he abandoned the tutor of his son to their vengeance. In the *Vita* the same story wears an uglier look: "Per amicos ex aula certior factus se peti, et Cardinalem Betonium a Rege pecunia vitam ejus mercari, elusis custodibus in Angliam

[1] Mr. Hume Brown (whose study of Buchanan has been of the most thorough kind) conjectures that "alterations and additions may have been made on the poems as originally written" (p. 93). They must have been rewritten if we are to take Buchanan's account literally; and it is to be remembered that that account refers to the poems as we know them.

[2] Buchanan, *Opera*, I. 277, Ruddiman.

contendit."[1] So insecure was life in those days that it was considered matter for special thankfulness that he escaped both the freebooters of the Border and the plague then raging in the north of England. It was probably now that he addressed the lines to Cromwell and to Henry VIII. which are printed in the Miscellanies with the epitaph on Nicholas Bacon, "tamdiu Britannici Regni secundum columen," wedged in between them. But these verses failed to bring the reward which Buchanan perhaps hoped for; and making no stay in England he passed over into France, where he was lost for many years to Scottish affairs.

The *Franciscanus* thus interrupted was left untouched during Buchanan's long exile. A quarter of a century afterwards it was resumed in widely different circumstances, and was published in 1564 with a dedication to the Earl of Murray. The Protestant party was then triumphant, and the satirist of the monks might expect reward instead of punishment. Though however the *Franciscanus* as a published work belongs to Buchanan's old age, in spirit and plan and partly in execution it belongs, as has been seen, to an earlier period. With the *Fratres Fraterrimi*, a collection of miscellaneous pieces directed against the Romish Church, it forms one great division of Buchanan's works, the authorship of which entitles him to rank as one of the great literary champions of the Scottish Reformation. It requires only to be more widely known and fairly weighed to rank him also as one of the foremost satirists of all time.

[1] Knox (*Work*, I. 71) roundly asserts that James "caused putt hands in that notable man, Maistir George Balquhanan."

That which renders the vast mass of mediaeval and modern Latin poetry unreal and its study a vanity is its artificiality both of subject and treatment. It stands apart from life and its sympathies, and wastes itself in the attempt to revivify a dead past. This objection applies to much of Buchanan's own work; but in the religious satires he had found a subject emphatically real and emphatically of the present. Just as the War of Independence had formed the Scottish nation in the past, so the struggle for a pure religion was destined to colour and direct the national life for generations to come. It is his adoption of this as his theme that gives strength to Buchanan's satire. The greatest satire must be true. It need not be, and it hardly can be, accurate in detail; but it must be the result of a profound conviction resting on a solid basis of reality. And Buchanan's satire was true. Sincerity is written in every line of the *Palinodia* and the *Franciscanus*. Their author sees in the monks an embodied iniquity which cannot be reformed and must be destroyed. The hopelessness of reformation within the Church struck other observers besides Buchanan. Lindsay felt it; and those who attacked religious abuses in a more regular way were soon driven in despair to give up all thought of compromise. It is not necessary at present to consider whether this view was right or no: it was the view generally taken at the time, and it accounts for much bitterness in word and subsequently in act. No doubt the opinions of the reformers and satirists were partial and prejudiced. There was a better side to monastic life which finds no recognition in them; and the

enormities they paint were not universal. But the satirist's business is not to depict the good as well as the evil of his victim: he is justified if he bases his strictures on a broad foundation of guilt. Such a foundation Juvenal had, and on it he builds up the fabric of an utterly corrupt society. Buchanan from similar materials creates the image of a corrupt church, and we recognise in it also the features of truth.

Though the voice of tradition has pronounced in favour of the version of the Psalms, there ought to be little hesitation now in assigning the foremost place among Buchanan's works to the satires on the Church; and of these the greatest is the *Palinodia*. Notwithstanding wide differences it courts comparison with the religious satires of Burns. There is the same merciless logic probing all the weak places of the faith, the same scorn of hypocrisy and determination to uphold the truth. Burns is superior to Buchanan in that poetic grace of mind which allows him to pause in his satire and enjoy the beauties of a "simmer Sunday morn"; but he is not more than equal in force and point, and he is hardly equal in conciseness and rapidity. Both poets suffered in their several ways for their championship of truth, but both remained unanswered and unanswerable.

In the *Palinodia*[1] Buchanan writes with bitter scorn, all the more effective for the thin veil under which it is covered. A style always keen and incisive, sometimes

[1] I speak of the *Palinodia* as one poem, and it is one in plan though printed in two parts in Buchanan's collected works. The first part relates the manner in which he was brought to see the error of his ways, and the second contains the recantation proper.

noble and eloquent, drives the truth home. He lays bare the sins of the monks one by one until it seems as if the whole Franciscan order was one mass of corruption. The effect would be almost nauseating were it not relieved by the plan of the poem and by the irony under which the true meaning is veiled. The design bears a general resemblance to Seneca's satire on the deification of Claudius, or, to given an English example, to Byron's *Vision of Judgment*, which is founded upon Seneca. The poet is borne in dream above the golden stars and is dragged before the tribunal of a stern judge with shaven head and angry threatening look. All around are girt with one girdle and clad in one colour, the colour of asses and wild geese and flint. The judge, who is habited like the rest, asks sternly how he dares mock the order which awes both King and Pope, and bids his attendants strip the culprit and make his limbs pay the penalty for his tongue. An unmeasured punishment produces the desired effect. When the offender gets a moment to breathe he cries for mercy, praying that the order may flourish ever holier, and always find old wives in plenty to believe. He will retract everything and praise the name of the brethren to the skies. Here begins an extraordinary series of double meanings which must have been in Buchanan's mind when he wrote that the piece was too ambiguous to please the King:—

"Vobis relligio est, sincero ascuescere recto,
Relligio est, Christi facta fidemque sequi:
Raraque simplicitas, et rara modestia vobis,
Et virtus rara est, et probitatis honos:
Fastus inauditus, nullaque libidine victum
Robur, nec duro fracta labore manus."

But he was too much in earnest to leave his meaning doubtful; and even if any one was obtuse enough to miss the significance of these lines, the scathing ridicule of the conclusion is unmistakable. Under a thin disguise of admiration he exposes the self-indulgence and pride, the falsehood and lust of the monks. Theirs is the life of calm repose undisturbed by the calls of duty. They reap what others sow, leaving to the labourers the danger and the pain. Their vow of poverty never stops their way to luxury and wealth. They make capital out of their worst passions, and win through them the reputation of exceeding piety among the simple, though the clear-sighted may laugh or grieve or gaze and be silent, each according to his nature.

The *Franciscanus* is by far the longest of Buchanan's satires, and is in merit second only to the inimitable *Palinodia*. In some respects it is even superior. It is more restrained; and though the plan hardly admits of the display of such varied powers, it gives an opportunity for a more systematic treatment of the vices of the Franciscans. The poem opens with a short dialogue between a youth who is eager to renounce the world and a more experienced friend who warns him that he will not find all as he expects in the cloisters. In an interesting passage this friend, probably Buchanan himself, tells the would-be devotee how he had been in boyhood seized with a similar desire and had been saved by wise advice,[1]

[1] If this can be taken as autobiographical it throws some light on Buchanan's early career. It has been asserted that he was himself at one time a monk; but of this there is no sufficient evidence, and the probability is that he had only thought of the Church as a profession.

which he repeats by way of warning. The men who don the cowl are not miracles of learning, but the destitute, the criminal, the lazy, the licentious, who hope to conceal their vices under the cloak of religion. They gather wealth by terrifying the dying into leaving their property to the monastery. Men wonder that the ancients could believe the fable of Cadmus and the dragon's teeth, yet they themselves believe that the contemptible mannikin, who but now hardly knew his letters and whom they would not have trusted to clean a stable, under the cowl becomes in a moment a marvel of wisdom and learning and honour. The secret is that he walks with slow step, bent head, eyes on the ground. He affects paleness, represses laughter when anyone is near, squeezes tears from dry eyes in praying, has a solemn formula for everything. In short, he is hypocrisy incarnate. When the rudiments are mastered, some old shaveling, blear-eyed, toothless, palsied, and wrinkled teaches the mysteries—how to wring the most from every class, from the rich matron and merchant down to the penniless maid-servant; how to enjoy pleasures without dread of consequences; how to work the confessional for personal ends; how to sway the minds of men by the dread of punishment and the hope of reward. And so on in great detail. There are over nine hundred lines in the *Franciscanus*, and there is a sting in every line. The old monk instructing his younger brethren is drawn with a masterly hand. Acute, cynical, utterly devoid of conscience, he estimates calmly every means by which he and they can increase their pleasures. The dogmas of the Church are to him so many instruments whereby he may gain his ends; and they are nothing more.

The question is simply how to indulge passion with safety. He will run no risks, for he can secure his end without risk. Some of the lighter touches are delicious. The aged monk going into the country is advised to get astride of an ass or mule, as the precepts of St. Francis forbid riding on horseback. We see the scholar's scorn peeping out in the passage where the old hypocrite shows how a little learning may be made to go a long way. An appearance of learning is necessary, yet the thorny paths of Aristotle's rules are too painful to tread. Nor is it necessary to do so. A few sentences of Cicero, a few lines of Virgil, or half an ode of Horace, used with discretion, will suffice. One genius built a reputation upon fifteen Latin words. No one need trouble himself about a barbarism or a chance solecism: it would be shameful if sacred mysteries must bow the neck to the halter of the grammarian.

It would have been strange if after so happy a beginning Buchanan had let his highest powers sleep for ever. He did not. To prove that he exercised in conversation the qualities which he could use so well in literature we have the fact that it was his sarcastic humour on which his countrymen seized as the salient feature of his character; and we have a number of minor satires not yet noticed and three books of epigrams (partly, but certainly not wholly, composed before this date) to show that he did not lay aside the satiric pen. But the very force of the earlier satires was hostile to his subsequent success in that form of composition. They caused his banishment, and banishment cut him off from those strong and wide social interests without which work of the kind could scarcely be continued.

For more than twenty years he was a stranger in strange lands, the centre perhaps of small academic societies, but scarcely reached by the mightier waves of life. Perhaps, too, the fact of his writing in Latin helped to conceal from him where his true powers lay. It seems in his case and in many others to have induced a habit of attempting everything, which was often fatal to high excellence. However this may be, he never again rose so high in satire, and he showed no disposition to recognise this as his special province. In one remarkable instance in his old days he returned to it; and it is noticeable that on that occasion he departed from his usual practice in two important particulars: he used Scotch instead of Latin and prose instead of verse.

The minor Latin satires contained in the *Fratres Fraterrimi* seem to have been composed partly during Buchanan's exile, partly after his return to Scotland. They are marked by his characteristic pungency; but the comparative triviality of the subjects cuts off much of the interest which attaches to the great satires on the Franciscan order, and through it the Church. For the most part they simply traverse again the ground that had been gone over in these. The cleverest among them, that entitled *In Antonium Tomarium Abbatem*, is a wonderful display of wit. It is a series of antitheses between the life of Christ and the life of the Abbot. They are almost the same, yet wide as the poles asunder. In this piece we have a taste of the qualities which mark the epigrams. It might have been predicted that Buchanan would succeed in this species of composition; for he had the penetrating wit and, when he chose, the nervous, concise style necessary to it. His

epigrams were highly esteemed in the author's own day, and long after it; and he was considered, not unjustly, one of the few masters of the art—a high compliment in view of the number who have attempted it and failed. Perhaps the best known among his epigrams is one said to be borrowed from an obscure Latin writer:—

Frustra ego te laudo, frustra me, Zoile, laedis:
Nemo mihi credit, Zoile, nemo tibi.

During the long exile thus occasioned Buchanan's career was a chequered one. He seems to have gone first to Paris; but the presence there of Cardinal Beaton caused him to flee farther. Before he again returned to Scotland he taught successively at Bordeaux, Paris, and Coimbra, and was tutor to the son of the Comte de Brissac. From 1539 to 1542 or 1543 he worked in the Collége de Guyenne under the principalship of his old colleague at Ste. Barbe, André de Gouvéa. For the next few years all that is known of his life is that for some time he taught in the Collége du Cardinal Lemoine. In 1547 he proceeded to Portugal with Gouvéa, who had been summoned thither by the king, John III., to superintend the College of Arts of the University of Coimbra. There Buchanan spent five troubled years. The perilous fame of the satires followed him. Gouvéa died within the first year, his college passed under the dominion of the Jesuits, and Buchanan was harassed with charges of heresy and vague offences against the Church. In the end he was confined for four months in a monastery—to be taught by the monks. There he began his paraphrase of the Psalms, which, however, was not finished till some years later, and not published till after his return to Scotland.

Buchanan shook from his feet the dust of Portugal in 1552. The Cretan ship in which he had taken passage landed him in England; but, after what must have been a very brief stay, he returned once more to Paris. There he lived for about two years. In 1555 he was engaged by the Comte de Brissac as tutor to his son, Timoleon du Cossé. He held this office for five years, moving about from France to Italy as the military duties of the Marshal demanded. During this period he tells us that he gave most of his time to the study of theology, in order that he might be able to form opinions on the questions which then filled the minds of men. He returned to Scotland at a date not exactly ascertained, but certainly not later than the beginning of 1562.

In the course of those two-and-twenty years Buchanan had laid a broad foundation for his scholarly fame. Most of his poetry belongs to this period. The four tragedies were written at Bordeaux—the translations into Latin of the *Medea* and *Alcestis* of Euripides, and the *Jephthes* and *Baptistes*, original compositions. It is impossible to say much in praise of them as tragedies: though he is in some respects happy in the *Jephthes*, Buchanan appears to have been deficient in dramatic power; and he composed his dramas mainly as exercises for the benefit of the students of his college. They contain however abundance of vigorous argument and not a little of graceful fancy. The style is clear and strong, but betrays too great a fondness for antithesis. The choice of subject in the case of the *Baptistes* is notable. In the bold and manly dedication to James VI., written long after the play itself, the author proclaims his wish that the

King may learn from it the fate of tyrants; and beyond doubt the desire to help the cause of liberty was one of Buchanan's motives in writing it.

To the period of the exile belong also the greater part of the elegies and of the miscellaneous collection entitled *Silvae*, many of the epigrams, and other occasional verses. These are written in a style whose most striking quality is force, but which is also at times singularly graceful and beautiful. They are less original than the satires, and there is a greater proportion of inferior work. Yet after all deductions have been made there remain a number of poems of genuine beauty. The first of the elegies, which describes the author's miseries as a teacher at Paris, has the ring of true feeling. The piece which follows it, *Maiae Calendae* is also fine, but is surpassed by another set of verses among the Miscellanies on the same subject. It is one of the most exquisite tributes in poetry to the poets' favourite season. The marriage of Mary Queen of Scots to the Dauphin offered a tempting subject to Buchanan's muse; and he did not neglect it. The *Epithalamium* is among the finest of his poems; but its merit is not of the kind characteristic of that species of composition. It is not until we come to the noble apostrophe describing the dowry Mary brought with her that the poet seems to put forth his full powers. Then his Scottish patriotism bursts forth with an energy which commands admiration, even though the colours in which he paints the wealth of his country may excite a smile. Not until Burns's *Vision* and Scott's *Lay* was Scotland again sung with such fervour. It is only the language in which Buchanan

writes that has prevented his lines from being as well known as theirs. Even as it is the following passage is one of the very few in his poetry that is not quite forgotten. It exhibits a man who was at once a patriot and a poet:—

"Illa pharetratis est propria gloria Scotis,
Cingere venatu saltus, superare natando
Flumina, ferre famem, contemnere frigora et aestus;
Nec fossa et muris patriam, sed Marte, tueri,
Et spreta incolumem vita defendere famam;
Polliciti servare fidem, sanctumque vereri
Numen amicitiae, mores, non munus amare.
Artibus his, totum fremerent cum bella per orbem,
Nullaque non leges tellus mutaret avitas
Externo subjecta jugo, gens una vetustis
Sedibus antiqua sub libertate resedit.
Substitit hic Gothi furor, hic gravis impetus haesit
Saxonis, hic Cimber superato Saxone, et acri
Perdomito Neuster Cimbro. Si volvere priscos
Non piget annales, hic et victoria fixit
Praecipitem Romana gradum; quem non gravis Auster
Reppulit, incultis non squalens Parthia campis,
Non aestu Meroe, non frigore Rhenus et Albis
Tardavit, Latium remorata est Scotia cursum."

It is melancholy to reflect that a mind such as Buchanan's wasted itself upon the long astronomical poem *De Sphaera.* The author himself considered this the greatest of his poems. It was begun at the time when he was in the household of de Brissac, but never finished. Copernicus had already promulgated his system; but Buchanan, like the great majority of his contemporaries, held by the older Ptolemaic system. The sole value of the poem lies in passages in which the author digresses from his subject and writes with his characteristic force and weight on themes less foreign to modern interest.

But by far the most famous of the works of his exile was the paraphrase of the Psalms. It is, indeed, that on which his reputation, among those who have not read him, chiefly rests to the present day. We may take the very general agreement among scholars at that time and since as a proof of its eminent merits compared with rival versions. But the task Buchanan had set himself was long; and although it is certain, notwithstanding Hallam's judgment to the contrary, that he spent much time over it and laboriously revised many of his versions, there are here and there evidences that he flagged at the work. His great defect is that he loses the characteristic beauty of the original, its terse strength and directness. Generally the paraphrase is greatly expanded, and the process of expansion is weakening. But it is in the freer renderings that he is best. His mind was steeped far more deeply in the classical than in the Hebraic spirit, and, as a rule, there is most poetry in the paraphrase where there is least of the singer of Israel. It is seldom that Buchanan fails to use his classical learning with discretion; though at least one glaring instance could be quoted, where he borrows the words of his favourite Horace, but hopelessly loses the *curiosa felicitas*. On the whole, the great version of the Psalms, laboriously written in twenty-nine metres, received with acclamation by the scholars of the day, and since traditional for its excellence, must be pronounced a comparative failure. There is nothing in it to raise its author conspicuously above contemporary Latin versifiers. Unless a little genuine poetry embodied in a great mass of skilful versification is sufficient foundation for a reputation, Buchanan's has no sure basis here.

Buchanan's return to Scotland brought him once more into contact with a national life, and its influence is reflected almost immediately in his works. There is more of reality, a larger share of the soul and spirit of a man in them, than the works of the exile possess. Nothing could demonstrate better the weight which is given by a multitude to a man's works. Scotchmen have always entertained a strong prejudice against the 'landlouper,' and the history of their numerous countrymen who were driven abroad to indulge their taste for letters, proves that there is ground for the prejudice. Clever enough, many of them, to rise to high positions in foreign seats of learning, and discharging their duties there for the most part competently, sometimes with high distinction, it was nevertheless only those who did some part of their work in their own country who produced any permanent effect. Had Knox remained all his life a pastor at Geneva, he would probably have distinguished himself as a disciple of Calvin, but he would have been of second-rate importance; Buchanan, but for his work in Scotland, would have ranked as a dilettante Latinist; and Andrew Melville might have been named with Henry Scrimger.

After Buchanan's return we lose the guidance of the autobiography; but as his life was now of a more public character, its main events can be easily traced. He hastened to profess the reformed faith, now the religion of the country. He had not till this time formally disowned the Church of Rome; but he had always been alive to its abuses; and his theological studies in the years when he was with de Brissac had deepened his sympathy with the doctrines of the Reformers. From

this time forth he took a prominent position in the Kirk. Notwithstanding this, he acted for a while as Mary's tutor in Latin, and seems at first not only to have entertained a high respect for her, but to have won her regard. He showed his admiration in various poetical tributes, especially in those beautiful lines in which he dedicated to her his paraphrase of the Psalms; while she in return bestowed upon him, first, a pension of 250 pounds Scots, and afterwards, in 1564, one of double that amount, to be paid to him from the lands of the Abbey of Crossraguel. He had much difficulty however in securing payment. But Buchanan never identified himself with the Queen's party. In the very year in which he received this grant, he dedicated his *Franciscanus* to the Earl of Murray; and two years later, through Murray's influence, he was appointed Principal of St. Leonard's College, St. Andrews. This appointment removed him from Edinburgh during some of the most eventful years of Scottish history.

But the calm of St. Andrews was of short duration, and after it ended the tone of Buchanan's life entirely changed. Up to that time he had appeared as a scholar and poet: in his remaining years he was a politician and controversialist. The events which brought about the change marched rapidly. Mary's marriage with Darnley, the assassination of Rizzio and the murder of Darnley, the Bothwell episode, the imprisonment in Lochleven, the escape, the battle of Langside, and finally the flight into England, succeeded one another with breathless rapidity. This mighty current drew all the talent of the country within it. Buchanan's powers were too commanding to escape notice, and his temper did not incline him to shrink from playing his part.

He followed in the train of Murray when he appeared with his colleagues before the commissioners appointed by Elizabeth to inquire into the case of Mary. This is a crucial fact in Buchanan's history. Murray was already recognised as his patron; but Mary too had bestowed favours upon him, and he had written of her in terms of warm admiration. Yet the charges of insincerity and ingratitude may be dismissed. The favours of Mary had been received and the encomiums written before the murder of Darnley and the marriage with Bothwell, and these events were sufficiently important to justify a change of front. At the same time Buchanan cannot be acquitted of excessive and indecent virulence in his attacks upon Mary. He was a man of violent passions, who, having once adopted an opinion, never hesitated to express it in the strongest terms and to support it by strong means. In the *Detectio*, to be noticed presently, he represented Mary as leading an openly vicious life during 1566; yet one of his own odes is in honour of the baptism of her son at the end of that year. But a blacker charge has been brought against him. The weightiest evidence adduced against Mary was contained in the celebrated Casket Letters; and Buchanan has been accused of forging them. The question of their authenticity is one which cannot be discussed here: it is enough to remark that there is no scrap of evidence against Buchanan; and a charge or hypothesis based on the mere belief that he possessed the necessary intellectual capacity is one which comes with peculiar grace from those who demand legal proof of Mary's guilt. Though however the disgrace of the Casket Letters, if there be disgrace to anyone but Mary, cannot be thrown upon the character of Buchanan, he did

play an important part in the controversy. It was by him that the case of the Regent and his party was laid before the world in the *Detectio Mariae Reginae Scotorum*, a splendidly forcible composition, marred by acrimony, by unmeasured invective, and by disregard of probability in the charges preferred. Even more interesting than the original Latin is the Scotch translation published soon after and ascribed to Buchanan himself. It is strong, terse, and precise. Buchanan's scholarship directs his taste and regulates his style without obtruding itself in the offensive way in which the learning of early writers is apt to be brought to the front.

As the authorship of this translation is doubtful it would be unsafe to found upon it any conclusions as to Buchanan's style in Scotch prose. He has however left one or two unquestioned specimens, the great resemblance of which to this is the chief reason for thinking, in spite of difficulties, that it may have been by him. One of these is an appeal called forth by the troubles following the death of the Regent Murray, entitled *Ane Admonitioun direct to the trew Lordis mantenaris of the Kingis Graces Authoritie.* Of more literary interest is the prose satire, *Chamaeleon*, which is directed against William Maitland of Lethington, the subtlest of all the politicians of the time, a match for Buchanan himself in keenness of intellect and caustic wit, and a great man in all but stability of purpose and weight of character. *Chamaeleon* exhibits to the full the close reasoning and nervous energy characteristic of the author's style, and proves his mastery of his native language. The language is Scotch of the purest type, not the Anglicised Scotch of Knox; and it is scarcely possible to suppress a

regret that the man who could write thus in his own tongue did not more frequently employ it. As a satire, however, *Chamaeleon* is only moderately successful. The disguise is worn too carelessly: it serves only to spare Buchanan the necessity of naming Lethington in connection with the astounding series of tergiversations with which he charges him. There is not sufficient mystery to admit of delicate innuendo or of those hints which derive their piquancy from the fact that they are not broad statements. *Chamaeleon* might, with very slight alterations, serve as an indictment against Lethington for his conduct during the whole course of his public life, and especially towards the Regent Murray.

After his return from England Buchanan again filled for a short time his old position at St. Andrews; but in 1570 he was removed thence to take charge of the education of the King, then only four years old. His colleague in this office was Peter Young. They were men very unlike in character. Young, according to contemporary testimony, was an efficient teacher indeed, but shrewd in his own interest, and careful not to cross a pupil so powerful; Buchanan was stern, unbending, heedless of everything but the way to train the mind and discipline the character of James. There is still extant an amusing story of his laying his hand upon "the Lord's anointed" and replying to courtly remonstrance with grim humour. He certainly was a strict disciplinarian—perhaps too strict. More than once in his works he addresses the King with blunt freedom, and James to the end of his life remembered him with awe. The result of his training could not be entirely satisfactory to Buchanan; but

it is to be remembered that if he did not succeed in making James a man he at least made him a scholar.

Meantime Buchanan did not forget the public affairs in which he had taken part; and in 1579 the result of his meditations upon them was given to the world in the shape of a dialogue, *De Jure Regni apud Scotos*, written, as he states in the dedication, "ante annos complures." It is the best of Buchanan's prose works. From the introductory questions it appears that the object of the work was to justify to foreign nations the proceedings of the Scots against Mary. The interlocutors are the author and Thomas Maitland. Buchanan institutes no elaborate investigation into the constitutional law of Scotland, such as might be expected from the title; but taking for his models the dialogues of antiquity he proceeds on philosophical principles to determine the relations of king and people. The leading positions maintained are that monarchy has its origin in a compact between sovereign and subjects; that to protect themselves the people impose laws upon the king; and that if he transgresses those laws he is liable to punishment.

It would be superfluous at the present day to seek to prove that the idea of such a contract is a mere fiction: it is more to the purpose to note the nature of the doctrines based upon it, and the rights the author assigns to the king as ruler of the people and to the people against the king. His idea of monarchy is a noble one, drawn not from the servile sentiments current in Europe in his day, but from the philosophy of Greece and the law of Rome. In his view mere unbridled

power is the mark not of a king but of a tyrant, and royal dignity consists not in the exercise of such a power, but in the ability and the will to rule for the sake of the people. As Buchanan beautifully expresses it, kings should be like the heavenly bodies, which, though we can do nothing to earn their favours, pour their light and heat upon us. Recognising such an ideal of kingly excellence as this, he finds within the bounds of law ample scope for the exercise of royal powers; and those bounds must not be crossed. He is very absolute on the point that the king exists for the people, not the people for the king. His zeal leads him so far as to maintain the doctrine of killing no murder in the case of tyrants, whom he speaks of as wolves to be hunted down without mercy and by every means available. No one is now concerned to defend such extreme views or to enquire whether an ordinary judge in an ordinary court has power to pronounce the doom of his sovereign. Notwithstanding these defects, the dialogue as a whole is a wonderful specimen of acute, powerful, and unshrinking reasoning. One whose mind is filled with the history of England rather than that of Scotland, who remembers how rapidly the doctrine of divine right grew and spread there, how tenaciously it kept the ground, and what firmness and courage and skill were required in the battle against it—such a one may be disposed to exaggerate the merit of Buchanan. In Scotland opposition to the sovereign was familiar, and monarchy was at the moment represented by a boy of thirteen. Yet, after all allowances have been made, it was no small matter in that age to see so clearly and to advocate so powerfully

the rights of the people against the king. The country recognised the significance of the work. It was answered and answered again by the friends of royalty, and awoke a controversy which was louder and more bitter a hundred years after Buchanan's death than when his dialogue was fresh. For the theatre had widened. Scotland had been united to England, and divine right and opposition to divine right had acquired a meaning identical in the two countries. In the long battle with the Stuarts Buchanan's doctrines exercised a strong influence. The English Royalists, conscious of the weight of his arguments, would gladly have suppressed the work which contained them. It had been already condemned in Scotland; and neither in his native country nor afterwards on the throne of England did James forgive his old tutor. Finally in 1683 the political writings of Buchanan had the honour to be burnt at Oxford along with those of Milton. But the controversy can hardly be said to have come to an end till Locke in his political pamphlets finally demolished the case of the Royalists.

The dialogue was regarded by Buchanan in the light of a mere *πάρεργον*. He was not only busy with public business, as keeper of the Privy Seal and as member of the commission appointed to inquire into the affairs of St. Andrews University, but he had besides on hand by far the most bulky of all his writings, the Latin History of Scotland. He laboured at it till the close of his life. James Melville in his diary narrates that when it was in the press the author's friends urged him to stop the printing for fear of the King's anger. Buchanan simply asked his advisers whether what he had written was true,

and on their replying that they believed it was, "Then," said he, "I will abide his feud and all his kin's." His death, 28th Sept. 1582, occurred so soon after the publication that there was little time to proceed against him.

The History was the work upon which Buchanan himself set most store; but the judgment of time has not confirmed his preference. It is not to a very great extent an original authority, and its merits as a piece of composition are not in themselves sufficient to recommend it. For the early period it is clear that Buchanan made no attempt at an exhaustive study of documents, and he betrays a credulity which is surprising in so keen a mind. The blemishes in that part of the History which deals with the writer's own time are equally conspicuous and more important. He is too evidently a partisan; and as an authority he is largely superseded by Knox, who, though a partisan also, had a deeper personal knowledge of affairs and wrote more earnestly. In its own day however the History was an important work. It appealed to and was read by the scholars of the Continent; and thus the main facts of Scottish history became widely known, and in particular the meaning and justification of the recent proceedings against the Queen percolated through yet another channel into the mind of Europe.

In the Memoirs of Sir James Melville of Halhill there is a sketch of Buchanan which may be quoted as the most interesting contemporary picture of him:—"Mester George was a stoik philosopher, and loked not far before the hand; a man of notable qualities for his learning and knawledge in Latin poesie, mekle maid accompt of

in other contrees, plaisant in company, rehersing at all occasions moralities schort and fecfull, wherof he had aboundance, and invented wher he wanted. He was also of gud religion for a poet, bot he was easely abused, and sa facill that he wes led with any company that he hanted for the tyme, quhilk maid him factious in his auld dayes; for he spak and wret as they that wer about him for the tym infourmed him. For he was becom sleperie and cairles, and followed in many thingis the vulgair oppinion, for he was naturally populaire, and extrem vengeable against any man that had offendit him, quhilk was his gretest falt."[1]

The weaknesses here spoken of are not all such as we should be inclined to ascribe to Buchanan; but the portrait was drawn when, as Melville intimates, age and infirmity had unstrung his mind and soured his temper; and it should be noticed that the worst charges against Buchanan are unsupported by a politician who was certainly not inclined to take an unduly favourable view of his public career. In truth those charges run counter to everything we know of the character of the man. He may be safely acquitted of all the blacker vices. His faults were those which spring from a hot, impulsive, uncontrolled temper. The evidence upon which Buchanan's personal character is impugned is almost entirely *a priori*. With reference to his public life we need something more than the conjecture that he *might* have forged the Casket Letters; and for his private life it is not enough to point to some gross lines in poems written in an age when all were gross.

[1] Maitland Club ed., p. 262.

The impression he leaves as a man is that of one with a full allowance of human weaknesses, but free from and superior to all meanness. Among scholars he is eminent for the freedom and flexibility of his mind. Most pure scholars, not in Buchanan's day alone but in all ages, have acquired something of the musty flavour of the books among which their lives were passed. Buchanan, with a few others, was saved by native greatness of mind from this misfortune. His pages are almost always fresh, conspicuously so when the subject is such as to bring his mind into direct contact with the great movement of his age. The pulse of human passion and human sympathy still beats through his works. The most astonishing feature about him, that which stamps him as unmistakably great, is that though one of the most distinguished of the most artificial class of men of letters the world has ever seen, he is not himself artificial. It is this too which causes the keenest pang of regret when we consider the language he chose for his writings, and how hopelessly, notwithstanding the splendour of his gifts, this cuts him off from his due share of influence on the national literature. Lindsay, a pygmy by comparison, is now a more conspicuous figure than he. And the regret is all the deeper because it is certain, from the few vernacular writings he has left, that Buchanan was a master of his native Scotch as well as of Latin. No writer of prose among his contemporaries or predecessors equals him; not Knox himself, fascinating as his *History of the Reformation* is. Buchanan is part of the sacrifice which the Renaissance demanded. The scholarship which it fostered, so fruitful in many respects, so profound in

its influence upon our modern civilisation, produced at one point a false idea as to the claims and capabilities of the "vulgar tongues" and of the common life. To this Buchanan fell a victim; and through this his rich endowments of mind and heart were half lost to his country.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION.

### *JOHN KNOX.*

AN attempt has been made in the previous chapters to show that literature, as represented by Lindsay and Buchanan, performed important services to the cause of reformation in religion. It is desirable to learn something of the nature of the reformation which they furthered; and to show how, in the works of its greatest advocate, it requited the help lent by literature. For though, unfortunately, the influence of the Scottish Reformation was in the end deeply prejudicial to art in all forms, its great leader, Knox, was not only the reformer of a kingdom, but the author of one of the most memorable books that kingdom has ever given to the world, a book which ought to take a high place even in the rich literature which the sixteenth century added to the English tongue.

John Knox was born at Gifford Gate, Haddington, in 1505. He received all the education his country could give him, first at the grammar school of Haddington, and afterwards at Glasgow University; but he did not obtain that last and highest polish from a Continental seat of learning which was needed for the making of a scholar, and in after years he was forced painfully to make good the

defect. That he to a certain extent did so in the midst of all the distractions of a busy and active life is one of the proofs of that thoroughness which stands out among his most prominent qualities. At Glasgow, whither he went in 1522, Knox came under the influence of Major, from whom he learnt the philosophy of the time, and also imbibed certain ideas calculated to raise doubts as to the absolute wisdom of the established order of things. He never took his degree; and the statement that after leaving Glasgow he taught as regent at St. Andrews is very questionable. As yet Knox had no quarrel with the Romish Church. He became one of the "Pope's Knights" "before he reached the age fixed by the canons of the Church,"[1] says M'Crie—a statement which requires a good deal of proof. If it is correct he must have been ordained before 1530. The new opinions were spreading; the teaching of Major was doubtless fermenting in Knox's own mind; and the twelve obscure years which followed his admission into the Catholic Church must have been years of doubt and mental conflict. It was characteristic of the man that he would not accept his faith at second hand. The study of the early fathers disposed him to lay unusual stress on the Scriptures, and it was only after he believed that he had found in the Bible a warrant for the doctrines of the Reformers that he joined the party which professed those doctrines. Some time later, in 1544, he fell under the influence of Wishart, and played a dramatic part in attendance upon him immediately before his arrest. He carried the two-handed sword which was usually borne before Wishart.

The story of Wishart is in outline at least well known.

[1] *Life*, I. 12, fifth edition.

After he had been for a considerable time the leading spirit in a movement which, though it could not yet be called widely popular,[1] was surely gaining ground, the Church thought it necessary to silence him. He was seized, carried to St. Andrews, tried, and burned to death on the 2nd March, 1546. Before two months were over Cardinal Beaton himself, the leader in these proceedings, for years the chief of Scottish Churchmen, and in his last days the most powerful person in the land, fell by the hand of assassins in his own castle of St. Andrews. There is no doubt as to the name of the act by which he fell. It was an assassination boldly and skilfully, but also mercilessly carried out. But its moral character has been very variously represented. There has been a tendency among enthusiasts for the Reformation to gloss it over and look upon the murderers as instruments of divine vengeance. Catholic writers, on the other hand, have exhausted their vocabulary in condemnation of it; and even the later Presbyterians have seen that some concession must be made to this view. The violence which is murder and therefore sin in opponents, does not become sacrifice and therefore virtue in the sight of Heaven when practised by associates. The most that can be urged for the act is that it partook of the nature of tyrannicide, and has whatever justification can be pleaded for deeds of that kind. But a further question arises as to the motives of the assassins. They have been regarded by most Scotchmen as men who, if they erred, erred from a pure enthusiasm

[1] Knox's account of Wishart's visit to Haddington helps to prove this. There was no stirring of the people, and no adequate explanation of their quietness can be offered except that they did not much care.

for the truth. There is however proof that they were not all single-minded. Some were in the pay of England; and the murder was a stroke dealt with the knowledge and connivance of the English authorities, quite as much on political as on religious grounds. Worst of all, the name of Wishart is sullied with the odium of these transactions with Henry VIII. A person called Wishart was the bearer of the letter to Henry containing the proposition of Norman Lesley and the others. It may have been another Wishart, but no other Wishart is known who was at that time stirring in political or religious matters. It is true that the story is inconsistent with all our ideas of Wishart and with all contemporary pictures of him; but stains of this sort are all too common on religious zealots, and it would be unsafe to say even of the gentlest and best of them that in all circumstances they would be incapable of joining in such intrigues.

It was after the martyrdom of Wishart and the murder of Beaton that Knox began to rise into prominence. He had no part in the murder; but there cannot be a doubt in any unprejudiced mind that he approved of it. This is denied by those followers of little faith who dare not believe that Knox can afford to have his character painted truthfully, like Cromwell's face, with all its furrows and wrinkles; but the more masculine among his panegyrists admit it, and the fact is plain from the narrative as it stands in Knox's *History of the Reformation.* Apart altogether from the famous marginal note, "the godly fact and woordis of James Melven," the whole tone is one of commendation; and at the end, after mentioning the "salting," etc., he adds, "these things we write mearelie," a phrase which

always indicates that Knox takes pleasure in the story he is telling. After the assassination he joined the party of the conspirators in the Castle of St. Andrews, endured the siege with them, and with them passed, on the surrender in July, 1547, into the French galleys. During the siege there occurred one of the most interesting, and in his own estimation one of the most important events in Knox's life, his public call to preach the Gospel. It came from the mouth of John Rough, preacher to the garrison, who in the name of God and the listening congregation summoned him to "take the public office and charge of preaching." Knox was overcome, burst into tears, rushed out, and shut himself up for solitary thought. But though the feeling of responsibility was unaffected, the office was too congenial to be declined. Knox was from that day a preacher, and soon the most powerful and effective preacher in Scotland. He himself with pardonable satisfaction quotes the comments on his first sermon: "Some said, 'Otheris sned the branches of the Papistrie, but he stryckis at the roote, to destroye the hole.'"[1]

From the time of the surrender of St. Andrews to February, 1549, Knox was a prisoner in the galleys. On obtaining release (through what means is unknown) he returned to England, and was soon installed as preacher at Berwick, where he made the acquaintance of Marjory Bowes, who afterwards became his wife. About two years later he was removed to Newcastle. It is evident that during his ministry in the north of England he proved to many an uncomfortable neighbour. To please Tunstall and the clergy he was called before the Council of the North (no unfriendly

[1] *History*, Wodrow ed., I. 192.

audience) to defend his doctrine that the mass is idolatrous; and he started to do it with an unimpeachable syllogism in Barbara. The Duke of Northumberland too, for reasons of his own, desired the removal of the uncompromising preacher. Perhaps Knox's habit of handling public questions freely in the pulpit had more to do with this desire than the reasons assigned for it, namely, his persistent neglect of Edward VI.'s first Prayer-Book, and the congregation of Scots whom he drew to Newcastle to hear him. It is easy to understand that the man who publicly bewailed the fall of Somerset must have been far from acceptable to Northumberland. But in spite of his conflicts with authority, through one of which he was called before the Privy Council, the government of Edward remained well disposed to Knox. He had been early made one of the royal chaplains, and he was offered more than one preferment in the Church, the most important being the bishopric of Rochester; but such offers he steadily declined because he was not sufficiently in accord with the English Church to accept a permanent charge in it. Still, Knox's sojourn in England might have lasted long had not the death of Edward changed everything. After a brief interval of tolerance he found himself, early in 1554, obliged to leave the country and the wife whom he had recently married. During his stay in England Knox had contrived to exercise considerable influence, not only over the congregations which came directly into contact with him, but also, in various points of ritual, etc., on the Church at large. Yet at almost fifty years of age he remained a man decidedly of the second rank, and not high in that.

Knox fled to Dieppe, and thence addressed to the

faithful in England a letter remarkable for its deeply earnest, lofty, and inspiring tone. After some wanderings he fixed upon Geneva as his place of exile, and there began that friendship with Calvin which lasted till death. There too Knox set himself to fill up the gaps in his education. But the man of action was restless and unsettled, journeying to and fro to Dieppe for news of his country, and returning more ill at ease than ever; for the prospects of the Protestants in Scotland and England were black enough. It was while he was in this unsettled state that he wrote the *Admonition to the Professors of God's Truth in England*, one of the most violent compositions he ever penned. It was dashed off in a white heat of zeal for the truth and rage against the persecutors. But the zeal and the rage outran prudence. Mary might be all he called her, but it was unwise to denounce a woman who held the destinies of England in the hollow of her hand as "false, dissembling, inconstant, proud, and a breaker of promyses, excepte suche promyses as she made to your God the Pope." Small wonder that the English Protestants referred part of their subsequent sufferings to this "outragious pamphlet of Knox's";[1] but it is certain that they exaggerated its effects in suggesting that it was the cause of the Smithfield burnings.

This pamphlet speedily brought trouble upon the head of its author. The persecutions in England had driven the Protestants abroad in such numbers that those settled at Frankfort proposed and obtained leave to form

[1] So called in the letter of the English Congregation at Frankfort to Calvin.

themselves into a separate congregation. Knox was called to be one of their pastors, and somewhat unwillingly he left his studies at Geneva to accept the charge. There were difficulties from the first as to the use of the Prayer-Book; but a compromise was made, and matters might have gone smoothly but for the unreasonable violence of some newcomers, who insisted upon its unqualified acceptance. Knox then spoke out his mind. His opponents resented his words, and went so far as to prefer a charge of high treason against him to the magistrates of the city. The charge was based on words in the *Admonition* directed against the Emperor and Queen Mary. The magistrates dared not disregard it, for there was in Knox's language more than enough to offend the delicate susceptibilities of a court; and they did the best they could for him in advising him to leave the city quietly.

After a short stay at Geneva, Knox set out in the autumn of 1555 for Scotland. In his *History*[1] he names himself among those who were driven by Mary's persecutions to Scotland; but it was only indirectly that affairs in England influenced his movement thither. The visit lasted only a few months. Arriving "in the end of the harvest," he left in July of the following year at the call of the English congregation of Geneva. But though short, this sojourn in Scotland was not unimportant. Knox's influence was at once thrown into the scale of the more advanced Reformers. He made a vigorous onslaught on all such as attempted to satisfy their conscience and consult their safety at the same time; thundered out

[1] I. 245.

his old denunciations of the mass as idolatry; and in an interesting discussion on that subject encountered for the first time and vanquished the keenest intellect then in Scotland, William Maitland of Lethington. The argument on which the temporisers mainly relied was that Paul at the command of James and the elders passed to the Temple to pay his vows. Knox's answer is characteristic. He argues, first, that the facts are unlike: to pay vows was never idolatry, the mass is. But secondly, "I greatly doubt whitther eyther James's commandiment or Paule's obedience proceaded from the Holy Ghost." Knox has been often accused, and accused with some truth, of arrogance; but probably he never said anything, from his own point of view, more arrogant than this. What would the Reformer, whose ultimate appeal was constantly to Scripture, have said of an opponent who ventured to cast doubt upon an instance drawn by him from that source? The conclusion of the discussion deserves to be quoted. "I see perfytlye," says Maitland as reported by Knox, "that our schiftis will serve nothing befoir God, seeing that they stand us in so small stead befoir man."[1] As Mr. Skelton remarks,[2] it would be interesting to hear what Lethington for his part had to say. But Knox's veracity is above doubt, and words reported on his own direct authority may be taken to have been actually spoken. It is possible, even probable, that he unintentionally gave to discussions of this kind a colour too favourable to himself; but he was too proud, too great, and too confident in the righteousness of his cause—in his own infallibility his detractors

[1] I. 248. [2] *Maitland of Lethington*, I. 209.

would say—to misrepresent deliberately. At the same time, it is difficult to believe that the subtle-minded Lethington was so easily disposed of. Probably the words meant to him something other than they meant to Knox—acquiescence, not conviction. And this is perhaps the secret of Lethington's constant defeats. He did not dare, or did not choose, to push home all the arguments he was master of. The charges of atheism which were brought against him may have been untrue—probably he did not concern himself much with the question of the existence of God; but it is clear that his religion lay on the surface. When, therefore, we see the astute and supple courtier and diplomatist silenced by an appeal to the dealings of the Lord with some old Jewish prince or patriarch, we look deeper for an explanation. Lethington may be supposed to have been as well aware as any of Knox's later critics that the argument from a far distant age and a dead civilisation to the present is deeply fallacious; but in that age and place it would not have been prudent to say so; and therefore the politician held his tongue.

The result of Knox's work at this time may be summed up in a few words. He inspired the professors of the new faith with fresh hope and confidence, made compromise difficult, and drew the Protestants together on terms of mutual confidence and a common understanding. The priests, naturally disturbed, summoned him to Edinburgh, but themselves found it convenient or prudent to discover a flaw in the summons. It was not till after Knox had left Scotland that a fresh summons was issued, sentence passed, and his effigy burnt. To wrestle with an antagonist was the

breath of Knox's nostrils; and in the vehemence of the *Appellation* with which he met this sentence we may trace not only a sense of the injustice of the procedure, but of more intimate personal wrong in being defrauded of the fight.

On his return to Geneva, Knox for some time led a life of quiet study and pastoral work as minister of the English congregation; but his eye was constantly on Scotland, and he already regarded himself, and was regarded by others, as a father of the Church there. Many doubtful questions of doctrine and life were referred to him, and his answers show a caution, prudence, and regard for the practicable which must surprise those who forget that he was at heart a statesman as well as a reformer. Once pass the line which he conceived to divide God's truth from devilish error, and he planted his foot like a rock and set his face like a flint; but on this side of that line he could and did give and take like a man of the world. This correspondence between Knox and the perplexed pious souls of his native country shows that he never dropped his connexion with Scotland. Accordingly, when, in 1557, a letter came from the lords of the reformed faith giving a glowing account of the condition and prospects of their party in Scotland, and inviting him to come to them, he readily assented. At Dieppe however he received news of a very different complexion. After waiting some time for more favourable letters, Knox, disappointed and piqued, returned to Geneva. He afterwards blamed himself for irresolution on this occasion, and acknowledged that the discouraging letters, coming as they did from individuals and not from the body as a whole which had invited him, were only a partial excuse.

In the last period of his residence at Geneva he was engaged in various literary undertakings. He assisted in that version of the Bible known as the Geneva Bible; he published several writings of his own; and, above all, he blew the famous *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstruous Regiment of Women*—the only one of his publications which did not bear his name; and even it contains a promise that the name shall be revealed. The point is a small one, but it shows a trait of the man's character. There was nothing he ever did that he feared or hesitated to avow. Knox took a final leave of Geneva in January, 1559. He had been again invited by the Protestant nobles, and this time they were thoroughly in earnest. He was annoyed, however, by the refusal of the English Government to permit his passage by land. He sailed direct to Leith, and landed there on the 2nd of May. Political tempest marks his arrival, and those who look upon him as the stormy petrel of religion impute it directly to his influence. They are partly right; for without Knox the strife might have been less violent, and would certainly have had a different result. But his coming coincides with a moral equinox. The powers of light and darkness, as both sides would have agreed in calling them, were drawing to an equality, and conflict was inevitable. Whatever view we take of the character of Mary of Guise, we can understand the distrust with which the Protestants regarded her. The martyrdom of Walter Mill showed how the clerical tide was setting. It roused the Protestants, and they were too formidable to be any longer either calmly ignored or silently crushed by the hand of power. Selfish greed was enlisted on their side as well as disinterested

zeal; for the possessions of the Church were so many arguments to the needy nobles to join the party which taught that those possessions did not belong to the Church at all. Motives more purely political were woven in with these. The history of Scotland is a story of continuous struggle against foreign domination. It had been necessary for centuries to play off France against England; but now the "auld friend" threatened to become more dangerous than the "auld enemy." The height to which French hopes rose under Mary of Guise is almost incredible. The Frenchmen in Scotland began "to devyde the landis and lordschippis according to thair awin fantaseis; for ane was styleit Monsieur de Ergyle; ane uther, Monsieur le Priour; the thrid, Monsieur de Ruthven."[1] This division between the French party and the English party blended with the division between Protestant and Catholic; but it also extended and deepened that division by adding to it the lukewarm Gallios, careless of religion but absorbed in politics.

When Knox arrived the struggle had already begun. The leading preachers were under summons to appear for trial on the 10th of the month, and the result of the proceedings was a sentence of outlawry unfairly obtained against them. Knox too was outlawed under the sentence passed against him in his absence after his former visit; but, undismayed, he uttered those exhortations which led to the sacking of the Perth monasteries on the 11th. Though this tumult brought the country to the verge of civil war, the quarrel was settled before it came to that extremity. Shortly after, at Cupar Moor, hostile forces confronted each

[1] Knox, I. 397.

other, but doubt and fear on both sides prevented a battle. The Congregation however, as the Protestant party called themselves, showed how much in earnest they were and how formidable were the forces they wielded by seizing Perth, Stirling, and finally Edinburgh. They held the capital long enough to set up the Protestant worship; and Knox was chosen minister of St. Giles; but when his friends were obliged to retire from the city, though they stipulated that the form of worship now adopted should be left undisturbed, it was judged prudent that Knox should withdraw and the less objectionable Willock take his place. Instead of immediately settling in any one town, he spent some time in journeying through Scotland, preaching in all the principal towns, and firing the people with his own enthusiasm. There can be no doubt that in this way his influence was greater than it could possibly have been had he remained in Edinburgh.

But Knox's work in those days was as much political as ministerial. It was rapidly becoming clear that the appeal to arms was inevitable—or rather that the arms already taken up must be used in more deadly earnest. The power of the government and the Catholic party was bolstered up by French troops; and the Lords of the Congregation turned to England for help. Nothing more strikingly shows the ascendency which Knox had acquired than the fact that, unpalatable as he was to the English Court, it was through him that negotiations were conducted, and that Elizabeth for political reasons was forced to treat with him. It was in the course of these negotiations that he, apparently for the first and only time, suggested a crooked course of policy: that England, to avoid a breach

with France, should connive at English volunteers joining the Protestant party, and even denounce them afterwards as rebels. With difficulty Elizabeth was induced to grant help; but she dealt it out with a niggardly hand, and the cause of the Congregation did not advance. The war had resolved itself into a siege, the siege of Leith; and the Scots were sorely handicapped by their want of skill while contending against enemies accustomed to Continental modes of attack and defence. They were repulsed and forced to retreat to Stirling.

The image of the trumpet, applied by Knox to the famous *Blast*, is appropriate to his whole style of oratory; and the trumpet never sounded a clearer and fuller note in victory than it did now to hearten a defeated and despairing party. He pointed out the sins which had brought this judgment upon their heads, laid down the conditions of future success, and roused them once more to hope and action. The arrival of an English force kept the hope alive; and though their troubles were by no means at an end they were ultimately successful. A treaty was concluded in July, 1560, under which the French troops were to leave the kingdom, and the government was to be vested in a council elected partly by the Estates, partly by Francis and Mary. For by this time Mary of Guise was dead. In the previous October a sentence of suspension had been passed against her in the name of "the nobility and commons of the Protestants of the Church of Scotland." She would not readily have forgiven the insult, and they would never have trusted her; so that her death, while the siege of Leith was in progress, removed one formidable obstacle to an understanding.

Soon after the conclusion of this treaty the Parliament on the petition of the Protestant barons and gentlemen, addressed itself to the reformation of religion. A Confession of Faith hastily drawn up and embodying the Protestant doctrines was presented, and on August 17th adopted; and so the principles of the Reformers formally triumphed. Only three temporal lords voted against the Confession, and the bishops, as Knox triumphantly remarks, "spaek nothing." This helplessness of the clergy was a feature of the whole struggle. With a few vigorous exceptions they did nothing for their own cause; their battle was fought by others; and this is one proof that the charges of ignorance and incompetence freely brought against them had a fairly firm foundation in fact.

The overthrow of Catholicism left the preachers in a commanding position. Their leader had been the soul of the political as well as the religious movement which issued in the Reformation; they had been consulted on the most important occasions of state as persons entitled to a deferential hearing; they had been thus enabled to give a remarkably theocratic complexion to the government; and it seemed as if for the future each minister was to hold a duplicate of the keys of St. Peter. One of the jeers of Lethington shows that already the yoke was heavy on the neck of the laity: "We mon now forget our selffis and beir the barrow to buyld the housses of God."[1]

The work which now lay before the Protestants was constructive—the further definition of their own creed and the practical establishment of a new ecclesiastical system. The earliest great contribution to this work was what is

[1] Knox, II. 89.

known as the First Book of Discipline. It was the joint production of Knox and four other ministers—Winram, Row, Spottiswood, and Douglas. The weapon they forged for the new Church was a formidable one. Certain limits were indeed set to her power. Crimes which the civil sword can touch were regarded as falling outside the jurisdiction of the Church. But a general inquisition of manners and morals may be made an instrument of the severest tyranny; and in the existing confusion it was maintained that even the wide limits of ordinary ecclesiastical jurisdiction might be overstepped and the graver crimes also dealt with. To this source may be traced those arrogant pretensions which for generations the Presbyterian ministers maintained. The Book of Discipline was however an able work. It contained in particular a large and liberal scheme of education, and it would have been well for the country if the financial proposals embodied in it had been adopted. Their substance was that out of the patrimony of the old Church provision should be made not only for the decent maintenance of the ministry of the reformed faith, but for education and for the poor as well. But here the ministers came into conflict with their most powerful supporters, the Lords of the Congregation, and discovered that they were not all moved by pure zeal for religion. It was easy to get the Lords to profess the faith which pleased their reverend brethren, impossible to unclasp their grip on Church property.

The arrival of Mary in August, 1561, introduced a new and important factor into politics. About the years which follow almost as much has been written as about all the rest of Scottish history. It is impossible to enter into the

discussion here, and equally impossible to pass it over without some expression of opinion. The marvellous ingenuity which has been spent in justifying Mary has been all in vain. Even if it could be proved that the Casket Letters were forged (and it seems most probable that they are genuine), the general course of events is almost conclusive against her. Only her beauty, sympathy with her tragic end, and in later times that perverse spirit of paradox which has found excuses even for Judas, could have blinded the able men who have undertaken her defence. But it is significant that the greatest of all those who from temperament and predilection might have been expected to champion her, gave up her case as hopeless. Scott cast aside the thought of writing a life of Mary, "because my opinion, in point of fact, is contrary both to the popular feeling and to my own."[1] This is not evidence against her; but the admission of the large, manly, sympathetic mind is more striking than a score of the wire-drawn arguments in her favour.

It was not long before Mary's presence re-opened the question of the mass. If the zealots had had their will neither queen nor subject would have been allowed to hear it. Knox speaks with no uncertain sound. In preaching he asserted, "that one Messe (thair war no mo suffered at first) was more fearful to him than gif ten thousand armed enemyes war landed in any pairte of the Realme, of purpose to suppresse the hoill religioun";[2] and of the more tolerant he says, "thair war Protestants found that eschaimed not at tables and other open places, to ask, 'Why may not the Queyn have hir awin Messe, and the forme of

[1] Lockhart, VII. 147. [2] *History*, II. 276.

hir religioun?'" More moderate counsels than his prevailed, and a private celebration of mass was permitted. No one will now defend such extremes as Knox advocated; but, on the other hand, it is folly to import modern principles of freedom of conscience into the embittered contests of the sixteenth century; and there is point in the question suggested by M'Crie, What would have become of a Huguenot Queen set to rule over a Roman Catholic kingdom? The Scottish Protestants had still but a slippery foothold, and though they might wisely have acted with more liberality, they could not, from sheer necessity of self-preservation, be perfectly tolerant.

Mary had unlimited confidence in her own powers of fascination. She determined to win Knox over by the force of her personal attractions. The Reformer was sent for, and the result was the first of the famous interviews between him and the Queen so often depicted with pencil and with pen. The sole original authority for those scenes is Knox himself, and all subsequent accounts are to be tested by reference to him. Every one is familiar with the picture of the merciless bigot brow-beating, insulting, trampling upon the young and beautiful queen; but it is grossly unfair to the great Protestant. The reader must inevitably pity Mary, well-intentioned, as yet innocent, but set by fate among intractable surroundings and foredoomed to failure. But pity for Mary ought not to crush out justice to the grander figure of Knox. He was no boor; he was simply a man convinced that he had found the truth and determined not to palter with it. There was no insult, no wanton insolence. If his words were bitter, the bitterness was due to his un-

bending integrity. As the messenger of eternal truth he dared not for his own soul's sake, and for hers, and for the lasting weal of his country, muffle his tones or wrap his meaning in the disguise of courtly compliment. And Mary had this at least to be grateful for, that her most formidable antagonist freely showed his hand. Knox's attitude towards the Queen might have been more conciliatory. He and his brethren claimed the right to meddle with affairs of State and the domestic relations of Mary in a way which must have seemed to her, as it seems to us, intolerable. But there is no foundation for the more offensive charges of wanton insult and brutality. The beauty and high position and even the subsequent misfortunes of Mary were powerless to make evil good, and the soul of Knox's offence consisted in his refusal to disguise his convictions. His position was hardly less difficult than that of the Queen herself. Nothing but superlative genius could win sympathy for an old, stern, cankered man in a controversy with youth and rank and beauty. Knox would have been more than human or much less than what he was if he had been able to escape the charge, at the mildest, of ungraciousness. He must either have been unfaithful to what he considered the truth, or he must have displayed an unexampled power of making the truth palatable. Unfaithful he would not and could not be. The truth in question was not his but God's. It was God, he fully believed, who spoke through his lips. Charged with such duties as his, he had no choice but to stand before the world harsh, unbending, and seemingly though not really pitiless.

Perhaps the most instructive of all the scenes between the Reformer and the Queen is that which occurred after his public remarks, in the year 1563, on the question of her marriage. The meeting was a stormy one. Knox maintained that it was not only his right but his duty to speak as he had spoken, until Mary burst into angry tears. Then, standing by, he addressed her: "Madam, in Goddis presence I speak: I never delyted in the weaping of any of Goddis creatures; yea, I can skarslie weill abyd the tearis of my awin boyes whome my awin hand correctis, much less can I rejoise in your Majesties weaping. But seing that I have offered unto you no just occasioun to be offended, but have spocken the treuth, as my vocatioun craves of me, I man sustean (albeit unwillinglie) your Majesties tearis, rather than I dar hurte my conscience, or betray my Commonwealth through my silence."[1] It is not to be wondered at that Mary, bred in the French court, and unable to grasp the limitations of royal authority in Scotland, failed to understand Knox. He surprised others besides the Queen. On one occasion, after the "second commouning," "the said Johne Knox departed with a reasonable meary countenance; whairat, some Papistis offended said, 'He is not effrayed.' Which heard of him he answered, 'Why should the pleasing face of a gentill woman effray me? I have looked in the faces of manie angrie men, and yitt have nott been effrayed above measure.'"[2]

Knox never altered the judgment which he records of Mary after the "first reasoning":—"Yf thair be not in hir a proud mind, a crafty will, and ane indurat hearte against

[1] *History*, II. 389. [2] *History*, II. 334.

God and his treuth, my judgment faileth me."[1] This, which he states in the *History* as the tenor of his conversation at the time, is confirmed by a letter to Cecil, dated 7th Oct., 1561: "In communication with her, I espyed such craft as I have not found in such aige."[2] Mary on her part tried against him in vain threats, expostulation, and even a charge of treason. Knox cared not for the threats; and from the charge of treason he escaped, probably because the lay lords, however they might disapprove of some parts of his conduct, knew that to crush him meant to deliver themselves into the hands of the Catholics. The Queen's marvellous powers of fascination had a greater, though only a passing effect. On one notable occasion, after an angry conversation the previous day, she summoned her antagonist, met him all smiles in the hunting field, and sent him delighted away with a commission to bring about a reconciliation between the Earl of Argyll and his wife.[3] But though even Knox's armour was penetrable, his policy was too much opposed to hers to permit of reconciliation. She would not give up the Catholics: he would not abstain from denouncing them. The defection, as he considered it, of the Protestant lords in favour of Mary only increased his anger and strengthened his determination. He broke with Murray, and for nearly two years there were three important parties in the State; the extreme and moderate Protestants, headed respectively by Knox and Murray; and the Catholics, led by Mary, and watching for an oppor-

[1] *History*, II. 286. [2] Quoted by M'Crie.

[3] The story is told in the *History*, II. 373 sqq. Knox there sets it down avowedly as an example of the Queen's dissimulation; but he was evidently pleased in spite of himself.

tunity to profit by the dissensions of their opponents. The Protestant leaders were not reconciled until, as Knox expresses it, the flame was quenched by the waters of affliction; and by that time it was evident that there was no room in the country for a moderate party. But if Knox thus for a time lost one important alliance, by his marriage in March, 1564, to Margaret Stewart, daughter of Lord Ochiltree, he gained another. His first wife had died between three and four years previously; and this second marriage displeased and even alarmed his enemies; for the Stewarts of Ochiltree were related to the royal house; and the opponents of Knox did not know how far the ambition of the Reformer might lead him. Their fears are the source of the ridiculous stories current at the time that he had used the black art, which was supposed to be the only means by which an old man in his position could win a young and high-born woman.

In the following years Knox's hand is less visible in public affairs than it had been. There was less for him to do after the new faith had been formally accepted. What he could and did do was to keep a vigilant eye on Mary's intrigues, and to rouse the people by his eloquence whenever anything prejudicial to religion, as he fancied, was being done. The freedom with which he spoke his mind with reference to the Queen's marriage has been already alluded to. The fruits of the alliance with Darnley were much what Knox had anticipated; and the degree to which he was moved and disturbed may be seen in the bitter sarcasm of his description of the state of things in religion in the year 1566.[1] The events which followed the

[1] *History*, II. 266.

murder of Darnley completely changed the sky of Scottish politics. The regency of Murray was a short summer of delight to the Protestants. The preceding troubles had led to a reconciliation between him and Knox, and the terms in which the Reformer refers to the Regent's death prove how well he was satisfied with his government. The image of the Lord so shines in Murray that the devil and the people to whom he is prince cannot abide it.

The career of Knox himself was drawing to a close. Grief for the loss of friends, disappointment at the over-clouding of the fair promise for the reformed faith, and the effects of unremitting toil on a frame never robust, brought on a stroke of apoplexy in October, 1570. The report ran among his triumphant enemies that the great Reformer was dead. They were mistaken: there were still two years of life before him, and as long as he lived he laboured against Popery.

Those two years were probably the most painful of Knox's life. Murray's strong rule had promised to put a stop to the disorders of Scotland; but during the regencies of Lennox and Mar they all revived. The power of the Queen's party grew. The defection of Kirkcaldy of Grange was a blow to Knox personally, for he loved the man; and besides, it put the castle of Edinburgh in the hands of his enemies, and made his position as minister of St. Giles one of great discomfort and some danger. It was deemed prudent that he should leave the capital; and accordingly he retired in May, 1571, to St. Andrews. His peace there was disturbed not only by private disputes but by the setting up of the "tulchan" bishoprics, which he was powerless to prevent. The hatred of his enemies followed

him in his retreat, and stories were circulated that he had raised saints by the black art, and that there had appeared among them the devil with horns. In August, 1572, Knox returned to Edinburgh. As his former colleague, John Craig, had been removed from St. Giles, and as Knox was physically incapable of doing the work, James Lawson was summoned in all haste from Aberdeen to take the place of Craig. On Sunday, Nov. 9th, Knox performed his last public duty at the installation of Lawson. The following Tuesday he was "stricken with a grit hoist," and on the 13th he desired his wife to pay his servants' fees, saying he would never give them another fee. On Friday, the 14th, he rose, and, though scarce able to sit, when asked what he would do, said, "he would go to the kirk and preich, for he thocht it had bene Sonday." On Monday, the 17th, the congregation came at his desire, and he addressed them, and was considerably the worse for the exertion. On Friday "he commandit Richard [Bannatyne] to gar make his kist, whairin he was borne to his buriall." He lingered on till Monday, the 24th, uttering from time to time exclamations which proved that his mind was constantly running on the scheme of salvation, even when his attendants imagined him to be asleep. The end came on the evening of that day, his last motion being a gesture of assent when exhorted to remember the promises of Christ.[1]

The figure of Knox in the world of letters is not at all proportionate to his intrinsic greatness. He was a man of deeds, not of words; and his greatest work consisted in the influence he exerted in moulding the character and history

[1] Bannatyne's *Memorials.*

of his countrymen. Yet his collected writings (including a number of letters to friends) fill six large volumes, a great portion of them the work of the busy years when he was acting as leader of the Scottish Protestants. All these writings bear more or less directly on the absorbing question of religion, for in that question the whole man Knox was immersed. But they bear upon religion in various ways. Some are practical exhortations to the professors of the reformed faith generally, or more particularly to congregations and sections of the Protestants with whom Knox had been specially connected. Such for example are the "admonitions" and "godly letters" which he from time to time addressed to the faithful. Others again are controversial writings dealing with points of speculative theology, as the treatise on Predestination, the Reasoning with Abbot Kennedy, and the answer to the Jesuit Tyrie. In yet another class must be placed those treatises which have a political cast, chief among which are the *Blast*, and above all the *History of the Reformation in Scotland.*

The writings of the first class are those which have least literary interest; and yet they were those in which their author himself felt that he was best fulfilling his destiny. He early recognised that his vocation was rather to stir men to action by preaching and by direct personal appeal, than to convince them by abstract and impersonal argument; and the addresses and epistles were committed to paper simply because distance made direct intercourse impossible. No one can fail to recognise the earnestness and sincerity which inspire them. To Knox the pastoral office was one not to be lightly taken up or

laid aside: the congregation to which he had once ministered had, he felt, a claim upon him while life lasted. In his declining days he longed to return to his former charge, the quiet congregation of Geneva. This affectionate regard for those among whom he was labouring or had laboured is one of the most lovable traits of his character. For those outside the fold of the true faith he had small charity, but to all within it his heart was generously open.

The theological works of Knox hold a peculiar position—peculiar because they are so inadequate to his place in the history of the Reformation. There will be general agreement that after the names of Luther, Calvin, and perhaps Zuinglius, no name connected with the rise of Protestantism stands higher than that of Knox. Yet in an age when theological speculation was rife, when every person of note and many of no note attempted it, the Scottish leader made no appreciable contribution to doctrine. Doubtless a professed theologian could point to some shades of opinion which he would mark off as the special contribution of Knox; and he certainly showed great resource in adapting the ecclesiastical polity of Calvin to new conditions and surroundings. But the fact remains that no world-stirring doctrine, nothing that any spirit higher than the bigotry of sects would fight for, belongs especially to Knox. He was not at all an original theologian; he was a theological polemic of rare force and acuteness and of respectable though not of the widest learning. It is the armoury of Calvin that supplies him with all his weapons; he can only claim the credit of wielding

them with dexterity and effect. And it is significant that his most considerable efforts are answers to opponents; indeed it was a law of his nature that he must be always struggling against some adversary, the universal adversary, the devil, if nothing more concrete offered.

The principal, indeed the only full and elaborate theological work which Knox has left, is the treatise on Predestination, or, to give its full title, *An answer to a great nomber of blasphemous cauillations written by an Anabaptist, and aduersarie of God's eternal Predestination, and confuted by John Knox, minister of God's word in Scotland.* It was printed at Geneva in 1560, and as the work of Knox's most vigorous years it may be fairly taken as the measure of what he could do in the sphere of theological speculation. The treatise is Calvin over again, but in a different atmosphere. Calvin knows, Knox feels; and some of the weaknesses incidental to feeling appear in his pages. He is at times too indignant with his adversary to answer his arguments, and vituperation occasionally takes the place of reasoning. It is obvious also that some of the arguments which he uses against the Anabaptist could be turned with crushing force against himself: for instance, it ill becomes the school to which Knox belonged, a school always ready on occasion to show an intimate acquaintance with the designs of deity, to plead that we cannot comprehend the ways of God.[1] No doubt there is truth in this; but it inculcates modesty on all points, not merely when

[1] The plea is advanced in answer to the argument that God cannot have reprobated any, because that would be cruel and unnatural.

assurance is inconvenient. The doctrine of the book need hardly be criticised. It teaches predestination in its hardest form, a doctrine familiar ever afterwards in Scotland, and one which worked out its own Nemesis two hundred years later in the shape of *Holy Willie's Prayer.*

Of the writings of Knox which have a political as well as a religious aspect two stand out prominent — the celebrated *Blast* and the *History of the Reformation in Scotland.*

*The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstruous Regiment of Women* has the force which never failed its author, and a degree of polish which in subsequent more distracted days he was seldom able to give to his writings. Its boldness, its dramatic fitness for the time (or unfitness as it might with equal truth be phrased), arrested and held the attention of men. It is now by far the best known of its author's works. Those who know nothing else about Knox, know him as the blind fanatic who, just on the eve when truth and righteousness were about to find shelter beneath the shield of a queen, set himself to prove that no woman ought ever to be a queen. The subject had been in Knox's mind ever since the accession of Mary to the English throne; he had fortified himself with high authority regarding it; and doubtless his fellow-worker and friend, Goodman, whose thoughts were travelling the same road, stimulated him. The *Blast*, therefore, was no immature and hasty work, but one which, whatever may have been the time occupied in the actual writing, had been simmering in its author's mind for some years. It is not for his learning that Knox has won fame; but still the pile of

authorities from Scripture and the Fathers, and from profane sources like Aristotle and the Digest, which he accumulates to prove his point, demonstrates that he was far from being contemptible as a student. The materials were plentiful, and Knox makes them glow with his own intense conviction and fuses them into one whole. His opinion of women is of the most contemptuous character.[1] They are "weake, fraile, impacient, feble, and foolishe"; they are "unconstant, variable, cruell, and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment." He piles epithet upon epithet with a wonderful wealth and strength of diction. As regards government, "it is no more possible that she being set aloft in authoritie above man shall resist the motions of pride, than it is able to the weake reed, or to the turning wethercocke, not to bowe or turne at the vehemencie of the unconstant wind."[2] No wonder that Elizabeth, at once vain and conscious of strength, found it impossible to forgive language of this kind. Yet in the *Blast* itself Knox had left himself a loophole of escape if he had been courtier enough to take advantage of it. He had to acknowledge such cases as those of Deborah and Huldah as exceptions: "The causes were known to God alone, why he toke the spirit of wisdome and force from all men of those ages, and did so mightily assist wemen against nature, and against his ordinarie course." But subsequently, when Knox did make some clumsy efforts to propitiate Elizabeth, he insisted too much on her case being against nature and against the ordinary

[1] His practice however was better than his theory.

[2] *Works*, IV. 381.

course of Providence, and laid too little emphasis on the spirit of wisdom and force which had been breathed into her.

This work, more than anything else, has called down upon Knox's head the condemnation alike of contemporaries and of subsequent generations. It is unfortunate for his reputation that the *Blast* is the best known of his writings, for it is the least wise. It displays his fiery energy, his boundless force, his profound earnestness, his rapid eloquence; but it shows also how these very qualities when uncontrolled may degenerate into violence and imprudence. Knox was by no means habitually imprudent, but from time to time he took the bit between his teeth and ran off ungovernable; and it was seldom that he could be afterwards brought to see his mistake. It was unwise to provoke the reigning Queen of England, and still more unwise to run the risk of alienating one who stood so near the throne as Elizabeth. By doing so, Knox harmed the Protestant cause; he made the alliance between England and Scotland more difficult to accomplish; and he offended some of his own warmest friends. Calvin censured the *Blast*, and spoke of the author with some asperity. Knox himself was so far convinced of the inexpediency of pursuing the subject that, though tempted by replies, he refrained from following it up as he had intended with a second and a third blast.

But the Knox of literature is Knox as he portrays himself, his age, and his country in the *Historie of the Reformatioun of Religioun within the Realme of Scotland*. This book is so intimately connected with the author's life that in

the preceding sketch of his career much of the criticism of it has necessarily been anticipated. Written in his busiest years, and often uncouth in style and disjointed from want of revision, it yet displays qualities far higher and more varied than anything else that ever came from his pen. Its position among histories is remarkable, in truth not much short of unique. An original authority written with the fullest knowledge by a man of genius and incomparable force, who himself made the history he narrates, is clearly a precious possession—at once the richest storehouse of facts and the most vivid picture of the age. The subject was exactly suited to the genius of the writer. His whole being was absorbed in it. He had to deal no longer with abstract and speculative religion, but with religion reduced to action, influencing the conduct of men and the destinies of nations, and weaving itself in with politics and the life of courts and camps no less than with the lives of families and individuals. The barriers which seem in the treatise on Predestination to hem Knox in so closely disappear, and he gives the world a bold, broad, forcible picture of the Scotland of the sixteenth century.

*The History of the Reformation* professedly leaves out of account many of the elements in the life of the nation. It is the work of a contemporary, subject to the errors inseparable from nearness to the events narrated. It is the work also of a partisan deeply committed to a particular view of the central controversy, and incapable of sympathy with the other side. Nevertheless it is incomparably the best account of the time. The limitation to matters of religion is less cramping than it might seem; for in that age above all others the question of religion

included everything; and the undoubted prejudice of the writer is balanced by his transparent truthfulness, and the courage and intense conviction which disdains, or rather never dreams of concealment. The history is therefore a trustworthy record of the knowledge of the man who knew most about the most important questions of his time. How far it towers above all other annals of the age can only be seen by comparison. In a generation and country in which the *Diurnal of Occurrents* may be taken as typical of the prevalent notion of history, Knox does not merely note down events. He marshals and arranges, selects and rejects, gives each fact its due place in what to him and to his readers is not a mere dead chronicle but a great and absorbing drama. The men and women in his pages are alive. They are persons whom he has met, with whom he has held familiar converse, and of whose characters he has in every case formed his own strong and vivid conception. The picture he presents may not, in the dispassionate judgment of later ages, be a true likeness, but it is always the picture of a man, never of a lay figure. Every person he touches upon, every incident he relates, stands clearly out in the light of his indignation, his scorn, or his hearty sympathy and liking. The note of hesitation is rare indeed; for Knox was almost as much a stranger to doubt as he was to fear—that is, after he had once made up his mind, which on important matters he did slowly and laboriously. Above all he had the gift of humour—humour of a ponderous rather than an elegant or playful cast it is true, but humour deep and genuine. Perfect mastery of the subject, insight alternately sarcastic and sympathetic, intense conviction, burning wrath against

wrongdoers (which means opponents), and inimitable vigour of style, are the leading characteristics of Knox's history; and these are so mingled and sustained that from beginning to end the book is never dull. The reader, if he chances to differ from the author on politics or religion, may be roused to anger, may denounce the bigotry, the hardness, the narrowness, the egotism of the writer, but he cannot find him tedious.

The *History*, after a preliminary sketch of previous religious movements in Scotland, and particularly that of the Lollards of Kyle, makes a formal beginning with the martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton in 1528, and from that point traces the development of the religious controversy down to the close of the year 1564, where the fourth book ends. The story is continued in a fifth book, which however was never finished by Knox, but compiled after his death from his papers. For the whole of this time Knox is an original authority of the highest rank and best type. He was over twenty years of age at the death of Hamilton; and even in the years of his banishment he was so closely connected with the religious movement, that his authority in relation to those years is only less than that which belongs to him in the time when he was himself the chief actor.

The most interesting questions which the *History* suggests with reference to its author as a man and a historian are, first, his tone with regard to his enemies, the Catholics; secondly, the nature of his relations with Mary; and thirdly, as affording a wider ground for judgment, his habitual attitude towards those with whom he was brought into close contact, either friendly or hostile. But indeed all parts of the *History* throw light upon Knox's own character. His

unmistakable stamp is upon it; and the charge of egotism has frequently been preferred against him because he makes himself the central figure of his own book. He certainly is the central figure; and it is not difficult to detect evidences of egotism. Nevertheless the accusation loses its weight when it is remembered that Knox could not but depict himself as the mainspring of the movement in religion without distorting facts and throwing everything into a false perspective.

Knox's language about the Catholics is such as might be expected from his character and circumstances. He held the most pronounced opinions, and expressed them with all the vigour of which words are capable. His vocabulary of abuse is rich and varied:—"Baales bleatting preastis," "idiot Doctouris," "Gray Freiris and Blak feindis," "Black thevis alias Freiris." Whatever savoured of Popery set his blood aflame. There was nothing in life he enjoyed so much as the opportunity of striking a downright blow at the Pope or his priests, unless it were the delight of recalling and relating as a "meary bourd" some scandal reflecting disgrace upon the Church. These same merry bourds or jests of Knox's have been the source of no small difficulty to many of his admirers. They are inconsistent with the gravity and dignity of a Reformer who ought to be, but persists in proving that he is not, superior to human weaknesses. So offensive were the stories that they sharpened the scent of the hunters after anachronisms which were to prove that the *History* was not written by Knox at all.[1] But the objections disappear as soon as we consent

[1] The mistakes and inconsistencies they discovered have long since been shown to be due to interpolations.

to regard Knox as a man of like passions with ourselves, a man rejoicing, as meaner mortals sometimes do, to catch an enemy tripping. The worst that can be said of his stories is that in one or two cases they illustrate the sixteenth century habit of calling things by their plain names. And on the other side of the account must be set the liveliness they give to the narrative and their positive historical value. How could Knox better illustrate the degradation of the cursing of the Church than by the ludicrous quotation from Friar William Arth?—"Ane hes tynt a spurtill. Thair is ane flaill stollin from thame beyound the burne. The goodwyiff of the other syd of the gait hes tynt a horne spune. Goddis malesen and myne I geve to thame that knawis of this geyre, and restoris it not."[1] No satire could be more effective: nothing in Lindsay on the subject is so pointed. But perhaps this side of Knox's mind is best illustrated by the story of the ridiculous quarrel between Dunbar, Archbishop of Glasgow, and Cardinal Beaton about the bearing of their crosses—a story accessible to every one in Carlyle's essay on the portraits of Knox. The other "merry bourds" breathe a similar spirit, though some of them would in the present day be thought more objectionable. There is nothing in them, nor in the *History* as a whole, that need seriously shock anyone who is prepared to hear a Reformer chuckle grimly over a scandalous tale, or who can sympathise with the stern joy of smiting a foe under the fifth rib. And a little reflection will lessen any distaste that may still be felt. It was rough work that Knox had to do, work demanding much more imperatively vigour than courtesy. The man of delicate sensibilities,

[1] *History*, I. 38.

the man who shrank from rough methods, and who shuddered at the suggestion of coarseness, would never have attempted what he accomplished.

These, however, are matters which pain chiefly the believing disciples of Knox. The Catholics of his own day and the advocates of religious liberty of recent times would draw up a stronger indictment against him. They would denounce him as intolerant, a preacher of persecution, and a justifier of assassination; and they could prove each point. It would be waste of time to discuss the question of tolerance. Knox did not know the meaning of the word; no more did anyone else in that age who was deeply engaged in the religious dispute on either side. A few laymen like Lethington may have grasped the idea; but it was because they were connected with the controversy only by accident. A more pregnant question, and one by no means so simple as it seems, is how far this intolerance can be justified. Knox's position is clearly laid down in the treatise on Predestination:—"We say, the man is not persecuted for his conscience, that, declining from God, blaspheming his Majestie, and contemning his religion, obstinately defendeth erroneous and fals doctrine. This man, I say, lawfully convicted, if he suffer the death pronounced by a lawful Magistrate, is not persecuted (as in the name of Servetus ye furiously complein), but he suffereth punishment according to God's commandment, pronounced in Deuteronomie, the 13 chapter."[1] But it must be added that, although this theory would have justified atrocities like the worst of Calvin's acts, Knox's hands were never stained with blood shed on account

[1] *Works*, V. 231.

of religious opinion. Not that he shrank from blood when, as he thought, occasion called for it. He rejoiced over the death of Beaton. He was equally satisfied with the fate of "that pultron and vyle knave Davie" (Rizzio), who was "justlie punished"; and Morton, Lindsay, and Ruthven, his slayers, are described as "unworthely left of thare brethrein." And yet on other occasions, when men of more moderate opinions would have felt free to act, Knox shows the most scrupulous regard for life. When he was consulted by his fellow-prisoners in the galleys on the question whether they were justified in making their escape, he pronounced that they might if it could be done without bloodshed. It is to be noticed that though Knox's *ex post facto* approval of the assassination of Rizzio and Beaton is demonstrated, there is no proof that he knew in either case of the design before it was accomplished. It may be suspected, therefore, that the persecutor who never persecuted,[1] the prisoner unjustly confined who would not slay his gaoler for liberty, though he might breathe fire and slaughter after the fact, would, had he been consulted beforehand, have raised his voice for mercy. At the worst, Knox's intolerance is always respectable, for it rests on a reasoned conviction and is never the result of a blind zeal divorced from understanding. There are, as Tulloch has pointed out, twelve years of significant silence and obscurity in Knox's life, during which, if we may judge from the position in which we find him at the beginning and the end of the period, he must have been gradually working his way from Romanism to Protestantism. After such an apprenticeship, and a life

[1] I refer to persecution to the death.

spent in maturing and confirming the opinions then formed, it is pardonable if those opinions were strongly and unyieldingly held.

Knox's opinion of Mary and his relations with her have been already discussed. There is much in them that throws light upon the man; yet perhaps it is by a reference to his promiscuous judgments of his contemporaries that we best learn the strength and weakness of his character, the extent and the limits of his insight as a historian. He was keen and penetrating whenever his wits were sharpened by opposition; but to the man who met him in the guise of a faithful professor he was guileless as a child. It was only after long experience that he was able in part to fathom the character of Lethington. He accepted without reserve the account which that astute diplomatist gave of his desertion of the Queen Regent in the crisis of the struggle between her and the Protestants: "Quhensoever matteris came in questioun, he spared not to speik his conscience; whiche libertie of toung, and gravitie of judgement, the Frenche did heyghlie disdane. Whiche perceaved by him, he convoyed him self away in a mornyng, and randered him self to Maister Kirkcaldye, Lard of Grange."[1] And in his earlier discussions with Lethington, whenever the latter can keep his bitter tongue from open sarcasm, Knox misses entirely the undercurrent of dissent which accompanies his opponent's expressions of conviction. Again, he takes the professions of the Scottish nobility as due entirely to love of religion, and dreams his dream undisturbed until their conduct on the question of the Church property makes it only too manifest that their

[1] *History*, I. 463.

motives were mixed. On the other hand, if his friends differed from him on questions which Knox considered vital, he did not spare to denounce them. Even Murray he broke with absolutely for a time; though it should be remarked that while condemning Murray's policy he had nothing to say against the character of the man.

Evidently it is necessary to test Knox's judgments by reference to something else; but this is the less difficult because, as the course of events opens his eyes, he himself often furnishes the means of correction. His errors are those of a man of strong passions, credulous for good where those who professed his own faith were concerned, for evil in respect of all who were tainted with the pollution of the Scarlet Woman; but they are minimised by his invincible truthfulness and by a natural acuteness which, once excited, seldom failed to penetrate to the heart of a question. We must reject many of the stories which Knox accepts without misgiving from public report; but it is seldom that his deliberate judgment on matters of weight has to be reversed. He had the endowments of a statesman in remarkable measure, and in the most unfavourable circumstances those endowments commanded recognition. It has already been pointed out that even Elizabeth had to recognise in him the true mouthpiece of Scotland. The statesmanlike mind is visible too in his work as a reformer. It is in the direction of ecclesiastical polity that he is most original. While he follows the model of Geneva, many important elements in the Presbyterian system of Scotland are the original contributions of Knox, or of Knox and his fellow-ministers; for it is, as a rule, impossible to disentangle his work from theirs. The

changes since made have in general had the effect of narrowing and hardening the system which we associate with the name of the great Reformer; for in his day the quarrel with Episcopacy was not so embittered as it afterwards became.

Knox was a Puritan, though a Puritan of very massive build; and he had his share of the Puritan faults, their want of sympathy with art and with the popular forms of recreation, and their tendency to misjudge all the non-religious aspects and elements of life. The Scottish Reformers, like the English Puritans, set their faces against the games and shows of the day, and in so doing brought themselves into violent conflict with the mob of Edinburgh, then just learning its own strength and developing those habits of turbulence which it retained for generations after. They had no appreciation of the innocent gaieties and elegancies of life, and often denounced Mary and her ladies for conduct in which the modern eye sees little to blame. It must however be remembered that the amusement at which they railed most fiercely, the dance, has greatly changed since the sixteenth century. Some forms of it had then a meaning, and a meaning best left in obscurity. On one occasion Knox's moralising on the fripperies of life is irresistibly quaint as well as grim. After an angry interview he had been sent from the Queen's cabinet to wait in an outer room, where he began "to forge talking of the ladyes who war thair sitting in all thair gorgious apparell; which espyed, he mearelie said, 'O fair Ladyes, how pleasing war this lyeff of youris, yf it should ever abyd, and then in the end we myght passe to heavin with all this gay gear. But fye upoun that knave Death, that will come whitther we

will or not! And when he hes laid on his areist, the foull wormes wilbe busye with this flesche, be it never so fayr and so tender, and the seally sowll, I fear, shalbe so feable, that it can neather cary with it gold, garnassing, targatting, pearle, nor pretious stanes.'"[1]

Yet Knox was no kill-joy. So far as he seems so, it is the result rather of the iron creed he had adopted than of the native disposition of the man. There was kindliness and even jollity at the root of his character. These qualities constantly appear in the humour which permeates his writings, and more touchingly on the rare occasions when they are suffered to modify his judgment, or at least his language. There is a passage in James Melville's Diary which shows Knox in a light that will be new to many. Regarding Morton's appointment of John Douglas as Bishop of St. Andrews, he says, "I hard Mr. Knox speak against it, bot sparinglie, because he louit the man, and with regrat, saying, 'Alas! for pitie, to lay vpone an auld weak man's bak, that quhilk twentie of the best gifts could nocht bear. It will wrak him and disgrace him.'"[2] One of the closing acts of Knox's life was prompted by a regard for the "creature-comforts" of his friends. Within a few days of his death two of them came to dine with him. He pierced a hogshead of wine for their entertainment, and "willed them to send for the same so long as it lasted, for that he would not tarry till it was drunken."[3]

All that is known of Knox prepares us to find him greater as a preacher than in any other capacity that can be measured by a literary standard. Unfortunately

[1] *History*, II. 389. [2] Wodrow Society ed., p. 31.
[3] *Bannatyne's Memorials.*

the materials for forming a judgment are scanty. One complete sermon and a few summaries and fragments are all that remain of that pulpit eloquence which made him singly a match for all the forces that could be arrayed against him. These poor remnants cannot fail to be impressive to any one who thinks of the issues which hung upon them when they were uttered; but it is difficult, for a Scotchman perhaps above all, to be just to the abridgements which Knox has occasionally given in his *History*. Three hundred years of denunciations against the Pope as the Man of Sin, the Antichrist, and so on, have somewhat weakened the force of these expressions. But it is a different matter where the *ipsissima verba* are preserved. Sometimes in tones of noble and solemn eloquence, sometimes with an energy of denunciation almost portentous, Knox rouses his hearers to maintain their cause, or scares them from the paths of sin. We hardly look to him for an illustration of what Matthew Arnold has called the "grand style"; he seems to lack an element of self-restraint necessary to it. And yet it would be difficult to find a better example of the grand style in prose than the passage which follows. The words were spoken at a time when Knox thought he perceived signs of backsliding, when those who had been hitherto the most faithful supporters of the Reformation seemed to him to be deserting the cause, and he was estranged even from Murray. It was in such circumstances that Knox's genius always flamed highest:—

"In the progresse of this corruptioun, and befoir the Parliament dissolved, Johne Knox, in his sermon befoir the most parte of the Nobilitie, began to enter in a deape

discourse of Goddis mercyes which that Realme had felt, and of that ingratitude quhilk he espyed almost in the hoill multitude, which God had marvelouslie delivered from the boundage and tyrannye both of bodye and saule. 'And now, my Lordis,' said he, 'I praise my God, throught Jesus Christ, that in your awin presence I may powre furth the sorowis of my hearte; yea, your selfis shalbe witnesse, yf that I shall maik any ley in thingis that ar bypast. From the begyning of Goddis myghty wirking within this Realme, I have been with you in your most desperat tentationis. Ask your awin consciences, and lett thame answer you befoir God, yf that I (not I, but Goddis spirite by me), in your greatest extremitie willed you nott ever to depend upoun your God, and in his name promissed unto you victorye and preservatioun from your ennemyes, so that you wold only depend upoun his protectioun, and preferr his glory to your awin lyves and worldlie commoditie. In your most extream dangearis I have bein with you: Sanct Johnestoun, Cowper Mure, and the Craiggis of Edinburgh, are yitt recent in my heart; yea, that dark and dolorouse nyght whairin all ye, my Lordis, with schame and feare left this toune, is yitt in my mynd; and God forbid that ever I forgett it. What was (I say) my exhortatioun unto you, and what is fallen in vane of all that God ever promised unto you by my mouth, ye your selfis yitt lyve to testifie. Thair is nott one of you against whom was death and destructioun threatned, perished in that danger: And how many of your ennemyes hes God plagued befoir your eyis! Shall this be the thankfulness that ye shall render unto your God, to betray his cause, when ye have it in your

awin handis to establesh it as ye please? The Quene, say ye, will not agree with us: Ask ye of hir that which by Goddis word ye may justlie requyre, and yf she will not agree with you in God, ye ar not bound to agree with her in the Devill: Lett hir plainelie understand so far of your myndis, and steall not from your formar stoutness in God, and he shall prosper you in your interpryses.'"[1]

But the preacher's habitual style seems to have been fierier, more headlong than this. All that was in Knox found expression from the pulpit; his self-confidence, his scorn and humour, his hostility, and his affection. There exists fortunately contemporary evidence of the effect of his preaching upon his hearers. James Melville, then a lad of fifteen, records the impression Knox produced upon him at St. Andrews in 1571:—"I hard him teatche ther the prophecie of Daniel that simmer and the wintar following. I haid my pen and my litle book, and tuk away sic things as I could comprehend. In the opening upp of his text he was moderat the space of an halff houre; bot when he enterit to application, he maid me sa to grew and tremble, that I could nocht hald a pen to wryt."[2] Still more impressive, as one of the most remarkable examples of the power of indomitable spirit to triumph over bodily frailty, is the sketch which the same diarist has left of the old man just before his death in 1572:—"I saw him everie day of his doctrine go hulie and fear, with a furring of martiks about his neck, and guid godlie Richart Ballanden his servand, haldin upe the vther oxtar, from the Abbey to the paroche Kirk, and be the said Richart and another

[1] *History*, II. 384.
[2] *Autobiography and Diary*, Wodrow Soc., p. 26.

servant, lifted vpe to the pulpit, whar he behovit to lean at his first entrie, bot or he haid done with his sermont, he was sa active and vigorus, that he was lyk to ding that pulpit in blads and flie out of it."[1]

Even scepticism need hardly grudge to this impressive figure the crowning glory which early admirers claimed for him—that of the power of prophecy. More recent followers have sought to deny that he himself advanced such a claim, or to explain it away. But surely denial and explanation are alike hopeless and unnecessary. Whatever may be thought of the reality of the gift, the belief that he possessed it sits not ill on him who, as Carlyle says, "resembles more than any of the moderns an old Hebrew prophet"; and there can be little doubt that the belief was genuine. In a great many cases Knox speaks simply as the interpreter of "the ways of God to man" with the ordinary means at his command—Scripture, the rules of right and wrong, the past dealings of Providence. But certainly in a few cases, in the prediction of the fate of Thomas Maitland and of Kirkcaldy of Grange for instance, we detect the confidence and precision of the seer. It is only to the modern mind that this is a stumbling-block. We should either despise the intellect or suspect the honesty of the man who should now indulge in such vaticinations, and we forget that at the Reformation the idea of a special enlightenment was familiar to every mind, and such enlightenment claimed by the best and most sincere.

[1] *Autobiography and Diary*, Wodrow Soc., p. 33.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE ANGLO-SCOTTISH POETS OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

It has become a commonplace of criticism that any profound agitation of the human mind, however apparently foreign to literature, is favourable to literary activity; and it is customary to point by way of illustration to the effect of the political activity of Athens in the age of Pericles upon the Athenian mind, of the French Revolution upon Europe at large, and of the Reformation more especially upon England. There is much truth in this doctrine; but facts do not justify the laying it down as an absolute rule. The Reformation and Renaissance in Scotland yield no equivalent to the poetry of Spenser and Shakespeare, the prose of Bacon and Hooker. On the contrary, when these forces had been fully developed we observe decay rather than progress in letters. The golden age of Scottish poetry is to be found in the time of James IV., before the Reformation, not after it, in the time of Mary. The great collections known as the Bannatyne and Maitland MSS. would almost seem to have been made under a kind of prescience that the art enshrined in them was a declining one and required to be preserved. A century and a half

passed before it again flourished as it had done up to the time of Lindsay. The ecclesiastical disputes which filled this long period were sufficient to keep the country in a state of unrest, but they were not of a character to produce, nor did they in fact produce, new ideas. They rather withered them. It is easy to understand how Luther's struggle for righteousness and purity against corruption throned in high places, or how the revolutionary cry—generous even if in part mistaken—of liberty, fraternity, and equality, stirred the minds of men to great thoughts as well as to great deeds; but to expect the same results from the petty quarrels of prelate and presbyter would be to show blindness to proportion. And it was the misfortune of Scotland that her Reformation, begun greatly and, as a struggle for freedom, rising occasionally to greatness even in later days, too often and too long dealt only with the trivial and commonplace.

The period thus adversely affected by the theological divisions within the country is not indeed an absolute blank in literature, but its productions are at once few and, alike in prose and in poetry, different in character from those of Pre-Reformation times. The earlier writers are distinctively Scotch. From the time of the War of Independence downwards the writers north of the Tweed have ideas and characteristics of their own which mark them off from their English brethren. After the Reformation the differences begin to be effaced. Even the prose of Knox is partly Anglicised; and after Knox the process of assimilation goes farther. Many causes combined to produce this result. Every event which weakened the old alliance with France, everything which drew Scotland

politically nearer to England, tended towards it. The union of the crowns promised it permanence. Under any circumstances the accession of James VI. to the English throne would have been an event of the highest importance; in the actual state of affairs it worked for the time, but only for the time, a revolution in literature. The king's own literary tastes made his influence greater than that of the ordinary sovereign would have been. While he was still in Scotland the small band of poets and poetasters had learned to look to him as the source of honour, and to bow with at least assumed deference to his canons of criticism. They took their satisfaction underhand in praising one another's works, and in comparing them with those of the royal scribbler, not to his advantage. Many of these men followed James to England, and formed around him one of those bands of "beggarly Scots" whose presence enraged his English subjects.

At a somewhat earlier time it is possible to trace other external influences on Scottish poetry besides the influence of England. Italian poetry, which through Wyatt and Surrey told so powerfully on English, affects similarly, though less directly and at a later date, the poetry of Scotland. It is traceable in the new forms and models which exercised the ingenuity of Montgomery, as well as in the translations of William Fowler and Stewart of Baldynneis. But the models of the Scots who frequented the English court of James were English. They were however not of the young and vigorous dramatic school. The sonneteers and euphuists were more congenial, more adaptable to the purposes of court panegyric and affected raptures; for the curse of patronage was upon these men.

At times, in their higher moods, they showed some of the chivalrous qualities of Sidney; in modes of thought and turns of expression they sometimes anticipated the Cavalier poets. They were like the Cavaliers in this, that if we except Drummond of Hawthornden, a man who led a life apart, they had little of the character of professional writers. Sir Robert Ayton, who on occasion soared above any of them, left behind but a few pieces. Sir Robert Kerr, afterwards Earl of Ancrum, whose contemporary reputation stood high, is now known only by a version of the Psalms and one fine sonnet addressed to Drummond of Hawthornden and printed with his works. Montrose, who came later, resembled these men in the scantiness of his verse. Those on the other hand whose effusions were more bulky, like Sir William Alexander of Menstrie, afterwards Earl of Stirling, Sir David Murray of Gorthy, and Alexander Craig of Rosecraig, had unfortunately but a small share of the fine frenzy. Their verse was courtly to a degree. Scotland's tears on the departure of James for England, Scotland's tears for his death, the joy of her very rivers and mountains when the sovereign deigned to revisit them, endless elegies on the death of Prince Henry—these and the like were the favourite subjects when the poets were not engaged in tinkering the royal psalms and acting admiration of the royal talents. Yet those men were admired in their day; and one of them, Sir William Alexander, won unmeasured commendation. Even Drummond, himself a poet, and a man who did not scatter his praises indiscriminately, considered him greater than Tasso.[1]

[1] Drummond was, however, a personal friend of Alexander.

Alexander's works have been thought worthy to be collected and published during the present generation, not through the agency of those literary and antiquarian societies which have given a dubious immortality to so many obscure scribblers, but as a private venture In the edition issued by Maurice Ogle at Glasgow they fill three respectable volumes, all solid versification; for the text is little encumbered with notes and the introductory matter is not bulky. There are therefore ample materials for forming a judgment upon the predecessor, and, as he was considered, the solitary rival among Scotchmen of Drummond of Hawthornden. The hitherto generally accepted date of his birth, 1580, is almost certainly too late, and too late probably by about a dozen years. If so, the greater part of his poems must no longer be regarded as the productions of a man quite young, but of one in the full maturity of his powers. Alexander followed closely after James to England, and thus came into personal contact with the great Elizabethans. The subjects which then occupied his own mind were of a nature to open it to the influences around; for *Darius*, the first of the *Monarchicke Tragedies*, had been published in Edinburgh in 1603, and the others of the series were composed in the very years when Shakespeare's great tragedies were being written and acted. At this time Alexander held a position in the household of Prince Henry, on whose death he passed into the service of Charles. From the year 1614, when he was made Master of Requests, political advancement much diminished his literary activity. His public career was fatal also to his personal popularity. All the

leading affairs with which he was connected brought him into deeper disrepute among his countrymen. The enormous grant of lands in Nova Scotia made to him in 1621 was not in itself unpopular; but the arrangement whereby those lands afterwards passed into the hands of the French, stripping Alexander's Nova Scotian baronets[1] of their possessions, was wrongly believed to have been the result of a dishonest barter by him, and brought upon him the loud complaints of all who had bought an interest in his domain. In the office of Secretary of State for Scotland, to which he was advanced in 1626, he earned a reputation for avarice which still further blackened his name all over the country. As the representative and mouthpiece of the court in the years when the court was most unpopular, it was indeed impossible for him to escape vituperation. His unfortunate connexion with King James's version of the Psalms, in which he had been the King's fellow-worker and counsellor, and which after the accession of Charles he had been appointed to revise, brought him into direct collision with the religious sentiment of the people. He obtained a monopoly for thirty-one years of the right of printing the royal version, which beyond doubt comes in part, probably in large part, from Alexander's own pen. It was decisively rejected in Scotland and regarded with disfavour in England; and the efforts made to enforce its acceptance only confirmed the ill repute of the monopolist who would have benefited by the success of those efforts. Some of his countrymen traced the finger of Providence

[1] On payment of £150, a man not only became a baronet of Nova Scotia but received a grant of six square miles of land.

in his later fate. Though he continued a favourite with the King, was raised to the peerage, and received various honours, misfortune overtook him, and he died in 1640, poor and unhappy.

Alexander's literary life, so far as it is marked out by dates of publication, is practically confined within the first eleven years of James's reign in England. It begins with the publication of the tragedy of *Darius* in 1603 and ends with the *Doomesday* in 1614. Setting aside the *Encouragement to Colonies*, the aim of which was practical, not literary, and the work he did in patching up the Psalms, he produced after the latter date nothing except fugitive verses. But although *Darius* was the first piece which he gave to the world, it is probable that his earliest composition was *Aurora*, a collection of sonnets interspersed with songs and madrigals, all on the subject of love. He calls it "this childish birth of a conceitie braine," and alludes to scenes of travel as if he were then among them. It is therefore probable that *Aurora* was written very soon after Alexander left college, when he is known to have travelled on the Continent with Archibald, seventh Earl of Argyll. The sonnets never reach a high level. They betray in numerous ingenuities of fancy and expression the "conceitie braine," and have all the artificiality and more than all the monotony to be looked for in so long a series devoted to the praises of a mistress and lamentations of her cruelty. Still, the author was young; and it might have been expected that greater experience in composition and the vigour of mind coming from maturer years would have enabled him to overcome his faults. That he disappoints such

hopes may be due to the stifling atmosphere of courtly compliment in which he afterwards moved. A favourable specimen of his style in *Aurora* may be found in the eighth song, a description of the charms of the lady. The ideas are, and were even then, hackneyed; but they are well strung together and gracefully expressed, and the song, notwithstanding a feeble conclusion, deserves more praise than it is possible to give to most of its class.

The other works of Sir W. Alexander are all, with the exception of some fugitive pieces, of a more serious cast than *Aurora*. The most obvious division among them is that which would separate the dramas from the rest; but it is a distinction more apparent than real; for the *Monarchicke Tragedies* are of all dramas the least dramatic. They are slow in movement, full of repetitions, destitute of living human characters, unfit alike for the stage and the study. Little or nothing is given as enacted; there is not even vigorous and progressive narrative, but, instead, windy commonplace reflections. The funeral pace of the action may be measured by the fact that the *Alexandraean Tragedy* opens with a long speech by the ghost of Alexander, bewailing that nobody will bury him; and in Act III., Scene 2, Olympias and Roxana are still lamenting his death, and have scarce any discoverable function but to lament it. The tragedies in short are unlike almost anything that the world is familiar with under the name of dramas. They stand apart from the true Elizabethan play with its abounding life, its vigorous action, its fulness of present interest. As little, perhaps even less, have they any vital relation to the classical drama. It is true

there are superficial resemblances, as in the employment of choruses; but of the severe order, the artistic beauty, the singleness of purpose, and the restraint of a Greek tragedy there is no trace. The unities are cast to the wind, not only those of time and place, which do not matter, but that of action as well, which does. If Alexander suggests anybody in the annals of dramatic composition it is Lord Brooke; and that because of common defects rather than common merits. The works of both are equally preposterous as plays; but Alexander's have not the power and weight of thought which half redeems Lord Brooke's tragedies.

It would be superfluous to examine in detail compositions which possess so little merit. The most interesting, perhaps, of the *Monarchicke Tragedies*, less for what it contains than for the comparison it suggests, is the latest, *Julius Cæsar*. It appeared first among the collected dramas in 1607,[1] and may be taken, therefore, as a mature fruit of the author's mind and literary experience. Most of the great Shakespearian tragedies were then known to the world; and it is almost certain that his *Julius Cæsar* was among the number. Yet Alexander's play presents no evidence of a study of Shakespeare's tragedy. Similarities of language and of matter may be all explained by reference to the original authorities from which both poets borrowed. There are few things in literary history more surprising than this picture of mediocrity cheerfully and confidently steering its own course across the track of genius, choosing the same subject but handling it quite

[1] It is said by Collier, in his Shakespeare, that there was an earlier edition in 1604.

differently, and to all appearance placidly assured of superiority. Had Sir William Alexander been weak-minded, the point would hardly have deserved notice. But, though little of a poet, he was a man far above the average in natural endowment, and familiar from boyhood with the study of literary form and the art of expression.

The rest of Alexander's works are partly political, like the *Tragedies*, partly religious. To the former class belongs the *Paraenesis to Prince Henry*, a poem of considerable length on the duties of a king. It has been extravagantly praised; but the grounds of the panegyric are hard to discover. There is evidence of considerable learning, of keen intelligence, and on the whole of more independence of mind than was to be expected from a courtier in the court of James. But independence of mind which expresses itself in generalities is comparatively inoffensive; and the strongest of Alexander's utterances are not to be compared with what James had been accustomed to hear in his native country. The power which the *Paraenesis* shows is however not of a poetic character. The piece is in fact a treatise perversely thrown into metrical form. This offence was one which was committed by all the so-called philosophical poets of the time as well as by Alexander; and it brought upon them this retribution, that having wilfully confused the boundaries of the two forms of composition, when they did choose a poetic subject they were never safe from lapsing into prose.

The pieces into which the element of religion enters largely are two in number: an unfinished heroic poem, *Jonathan*, which relates the story of the relief of Jabesh by Saul; and another poem called *Doomesday*, which in

length almost rivals the other works of its author collectively and in dreariness surpasses all. It is divided into twelve "hours," and contains some 10,000 or 11,000 lines. Beginning with a sort of sketch of the world's spiritual history, it goes on to describe the judgment, and ends with a picture of the tortures of the damned and the happiness of the blest. It is crude, seldom vigorous, and hardly ever poetic. There is a great show of learning; for to describe the multitude gathered for judgment the poet ransacks not only Scripture but secular history and mythology as well. The history however is not always accurate, and is rarely informed with imagination; the theology is rather orthodox than enlightened. "Lycurgus, Minos, Solon, and the rest," who "heavenly wits to worldly ways did wrest," fare badly. In a word, the whole poem is the laborious production of a man who had set himself a task for which he was wholly unfitted. To have done it well would have required a powerful imagination, which Alexander did not possess. He presents the reader with no pictures, only a series of catalogues—a catalogue of the souls judged, a catalogue of the tortures of the damned, a catalogue of the joys of heaven.

A review of Alexander's works, as a whole, leads then to the conclusion that he was a man who mistook his vocation. It would be easy to turn his verse into utter ridicule; there needs but a reference to the absurd inflation of the lines beginning "No corpulent sanguinians make me feare," and a comparison of Shakespeare's treatment of the same passage in North's Plutarch, "Let me have men about me that are fat," etc. But the student of Elizabethan literature, knowing how uneven is the work of men much greater than

Alexander, will be wary of receiving impressions from single passages. Though nature never meant him for a poet, he had sufficient fancy to sustain him in a short flight; and practice might have given him some share of that exquisiteness of expression which the lyric and the sonnet imperatively demand. It would never have given his harder mind that misty, dreamy idealism which is the great charm of his friend Drummond of Hawthornden. Alexander's best work is contained in the *Aurora*, and in occasional bits of the tragic choruses. In 1637 he republished his works under the title of *Recreations with the Muses;* but, for some obscure cause, *Aurora* was omitted. The reason may have been some fact in the poet's life, though the sonnets do not read as if any real passion lay beneath the poetical expression; or it may have been that they scarcely harmonised in tone with the *Tragedies* and *Doomesday;* but probably the true secret of the exclusion was that the author considered these light love-poems unworthy of him. Ambition, combined with the precept and example of his royal master, led him to attempt what he considered loftier subjects, and to seek a place among the philosophic poets. On those high themes "he numbrous notes with measured fury frames"—for it is thus that he unconsciously, but with too sure a hand, describes a style which is really his own.

Of the followers of such a leader, the satellites of such a poetical luminary, not much was to be expected. One of them, Sir David Murray of Gorthy, trod in his life pretty closely in the footsteps of Lord Stirling. He too deserted Scotland for the fatter English pastures, became attached to the household of Prince Henry, and sought to climb into

the royal favour by way of Parnassus. His works are all on the orthodox lines. We have a series of about twenty sonnets, irregular, but sometimes rather prettily fanciful, to a lady named Celia. There is also a larger and more ambitious poem on *The Tragicall death of Sophonisba*, wherein Sophonisba is compared to Sidney's "faire, faire Philoclea." The name of Murray's heroine is of ill omen to Scottish poets. "O Sophonisba, Sophonisba, O!" was the line which damned Thomson's luckless tragedy; and the exclamation might well be turned against the earlier poet. His *Sophonisba* is tedious, inflated, and verbose. He had not the power to write a poem of any length, though he had a certain knack which serves well enough in shorter pieces —provided his readers will consent to dispense with ideas, for Murray is a mere imitator.

Another contemporary was Alexander Craig, "Scoto-Britane," as he styles himself, the author of *Poetical Essays*, *Poetical Recreations*, and *Amorous Songs*, *Sonets*, *and Elegies*. Like Stirling and Murray he strove, but at a greater distance and with less success, to find his interest in the fortunes of James. There is something pathetic in the way in which the poor poet, animated by hope scantily gratified, but never extinguished, seizes every occasion that may recommend him at court. In truth Craig's lines did not deserve much; yet the numerous classical allusions might have won the favour of a somewhat pedantic scholar; and the praise of the sovereign, who is now Apollo, now a godly David, "a prophet and prince," must have given some pleasure to ears greedy of praise and not fastidious as to its quality.

Sir Robert Ayton, elegant courtier and accomplished

gentleman, is less bulky in his verse than any of these men, but more poetical. Fortune smiled upon him from his birth. He had the best education his native country could afford, improved afterwards by residence in France; he held an honourable position at Court, acting as secretary first to Anne of Denmark, and afterwards to Henrietta Maria; and as a mark of the royal favour—not much of a distinction at that time—he was knighted. Thus Ayton had from his position abundant opportunity to learn all that belonged to the *rôle* of the fine gentleman. Among the rest he learned to perfection the mode of writing appropriate to the character—to such perfection indeed that he could soon instruct his teachers. He was one of the first who wrote in what we are accustomed to call the Cavalier manner. He has all the grace and light-hearted airiness of the Cavalier, and he has also the under-current of earnestness, of sincerity, and of loyalty to his mistress and his sovereign which saves the Cavalier from the charge of mere trifling. Dryden did not exaggerate when he said that some of Ayton's verses were among the best of that age.[1] At his best he is worthy to rank with any of the Cavalier poets. But unfortunately, as he resembled them in other points, so he did also in irregularity. As an author he is quite irresponsible; his pieces are merely fugitive, and they are few in number. Perhaps this is, after all, not a matter for regret. Those who are spiritually of kin to Ayton are essentially fitful, strangely felicitous in their most careless verses, but dull and heavy when they determine to make a poem. Among Ayton's writings are printed some verses on "Old Acquaintance," interesting in connection with

[1] John Aubrey quoted by Wilson, *Scottish Poets*.

Burns's *Auld Lang Syne;* but their authorship is disputed; and it is also doubtful whether he wrote the verses beginning, "I do confess thou'rt smooth and fair." Perhaps the finest specimen of his work is the beautiful piece, *On a Woman's Inconstancy:*—

"I lov'd thee once, I'll love no more,
Thine be the grief, as is the blame;
Thou art not what thou wast before,
What reason I should be the same?
He that can love unlov'd again
Hath better store of love than brain.
God send me love my debts to pay,
While unthrifts fool their love away.

"Nothing could have my love o'erthrown,
If thou had still continued mine;
Yea, if thou had remained thy own,
I might, perchance, have still been thine.
But thou thy freedom did recal
That if thou might elsewhere inthral;
And then how could I but disdain
A captive's captive to remain.

"When new desires had conquered thee,
And chang'd the object of thy will,
It had been lethargy in me,
No constancy, to love thee still:
Yea, it had been a sin to go
And prostitute affection so,
Since we are taught no prayers to say
To such as must to others pray.

"Yet do thou glory in thy choice,
Thy choice of his good fortune boast:
I'll neither grieve nor yet rejoice,
To see him gain what I have lost.
The height of my disdain shall be
To laugh at him, to blush for thee,
To love thee still, but go no more
A begging to a beggar's door."

The imitative poetry here described continued to flourish, or at least to exist, under the shelter of the court, until about the time of the great quarrel between King and Parliament, which, as it affected Scotland, may be better described as the quarrel between Presbytery and Episcopacy. In the latter part of this period of nearly forty years however the connexion with the court was very much loosened. The Stuart sovereigns could not at once thrust off the poverty-stricken following of their countrymen; but they were from the first ashamed of it, and the kingly Charles naturally objected to it more strongly than his undignified father. Accordingly we find that though the poets continued to paint the universe in sunshine when the court rejoiced and to spread it with pall on occasions of gloom, they spoke as a rule from a distance, whence they were probably unheard as they were certainly little heeded. Rank and position alone could save a man from being thus elbowed aside. They saved the great Montrose. We think of him more as the man of action than the man of letters, rather as the hero than the hero's *vates sacer*. He was both. His verses are unequal; but some of them have lived in the minds of all who care for poetry. Montrose was the ideal cavalier, complete at all points—the hero in the field, the statesman in the cabinet, the scholar in the library, the accomplished squire of dames in his lighter moments. He is the only Scottish successor of Ayton. His poems are so few that it almost requires an apology to rank him as a poet. They show too that uncertainty of touch which was common to the Cavalier poets: in a felicitous moment he writes exquisitely, in a less happy mood he sinks almost to doggerel. His

best known lines are those to the tune, "I'll never love thee more," and they illustrate forcibly this irregularity. Some of the stanzas are in the finest style of the cavalier love-lyric, others are intolerably frigid. Mark Napier, the biographer of Montrose, sees in the whole, not a set of love-verses, but a political composition, in which the speaker is Charles and the mistress is the State. If this opinion is right, and it harmonises well enough with the taste of the time and the contents of the poem, the harsh conceit upon which it is based must be regarded as a fundamental defect of the poem. Nothing however can spoil the felicity of these stanzas:—

"As Alexander I will reign,
And I will reign alone;
My thoughts did evermore disdain
A rival on my throne.
He either fears his fate too much,
Or his desert is small,
That dares not put it to the touch
To gain or lose it all.

. . . . . .

But if thou wilt prove faithful then,
And constant to thy word,
I'll make thee glorious by my pen,
And famous by my sword;
I'll serve thee in such noble ways
Was never heard before;
I'll crown and deck thee all with bayes,
And love thee more and more.

. . . . . .

The golden laws of love shall be
Upon those pillars hung:
A single heart—a simple eye—
A true and constant tongue,—

Let no man to more love pretend
Than he has hearts in store,—
True love begun will never end,—
Love one and love no more.

In the lines quoted below Montrose appears in another mood. They are chargeable with bombast; but it is a noble bombast, and it should never be forgotten that Montrose's deeds had given a solid foundation to his most swelling words. What would be ridiculous excess in a common man is moderation in the mouth of the hero of Inverlochy and Kilsyth.

ON CHARLES I.

Great, Good, and Just, could I but rate
My griefs and thy too rigide fate,
I'd weep the world to such a straine
As it should once deluge again.
But since thy loud-tongued blood demands supplies
More from Briareus hands than Argos eyes,
I'll sing thine obsequies with trumpet sounds,
And write thine Epitaphs in blood and wounds.

Montrose's place as a poet falls chronologically considerably later than that of the men who have been previously mentioned. There is probability in the conjecture of Napier that his verses may be mostly referred to the year 1642 when, according to Baillie, he had "for this long while been very quiet." There are still a few to be noticed who were in time prior to him, but who have been postponed as less intimately connected than he with the court, which gives the tone to all this verse.

One of these was George Lauder, a man sprung of a family devoted to letters and gifted with genius; for he was grandson of Sir Richard Maitland of Lethington.

His verse possesses the spirit of his family and of his soldierly profession; but he affects a pseudo-classical style which is fatal to excellence, and it takes all his vigour and all his quaintness to win pardon for his learning.

Another adventurer of a different type was Simion Grahame, the dark saturnine author of *The Anatomie of Humours*. Grahame, who had little else in common with his contemporaries, agreed with the majority of them in this, that he owed to James what he was, and looked to him for what he hoped to be. His history is obscure. He was born probably in Edinburgh about 1570. His family must have had influence at court, for he was educated under royal patronage; but either court favour left him or he left it. His early manhood was spent in travelling. His fortunes however were bad, and his life, it would seem, not much better. In 1604 we find him in England, doubtless drawn thither by James. In that year he published *The Passionate Sparke of a Relenting Mind*, a small collection of verses remarkable only for the grandiloquent and highly figurative prose dedication to the King, conceived in a spirit, the memory of which is preserved if not consecrated by the dedication of the authorised version of the Bible. Grahame's much more notable work, *The Anatomie of Humours*, appeared five years later, inscribed to the Earl of Montrose, who was also a Graham. It is a medley of often forcible prose and of generally weak verse. Many will think that the most memorable thing about the book is that it seems to have given the hint to Burton for his *Anatomie of Melancholy*. Yet Grahame's *Anatomie* is a work of no

common force, though it is repulsively and unnaturally gloomy. The humours are nearly all of the vicious kind. In the author's philosophy of human nature we can trace the influence of his wandering life and the bitterness of his own experience. There are numerous pictures of typical characters, some of them indubitably powerful and possessing that species of attraction which belongs to certain kinds of horrors. Such for example are the characters of the quack and of the latter-meat man (the insignificant person for whom there is no room at a great man's feast and who waits for the remains). Grahame's further pursuit of letters was cut short by a renewed exile, and, according to Dempster, in 1614 by death. He is said to have been a voluminous author, but he is now known only by the two works mentioned.

Neither the atmosphere of a court nor the life of homeless adventure is favourable to poetry; and one or other was the lot of most of the Scotchmen who cultivated the art in the early part of the seventeen century. There was however one exception, one man whose happier star preserved him from the evils of both, and gave him just those surroundings which best suited his genius. William Drummond was the son of a Lothian laird of good position. He was born 13th December, 1585, and educated at the High School and University of Edinburgh, where he graduated in 1605. Soon afterwards he went abroad to study law; but in 1609 he was in Scotland once more; and the death of his father in the following year, making Drummond master of a competency, banished from his mind all thoughts of seriously prosecuting an uncongenial study. He retired to Haw-

thornden, the domain for ever associated with his name and memory, the "classic Hawthornden" and "caverned Hawthornden" of later poetry, the haunt of the modern tourist attracted thither partly by Drummond, partly by Scott, partly by the natural beauty which charmed both. The place might have been made by the gods for a poet of Drummond's meditative, romantic temperament. He felt that it suited him, and he lived there for many years a retired life whose most exciting incidents were the composition and publication of his various works. The leisure which this retirement gave him prompted Drummond to those voluminous jottings which have in many points proved so interesting to modern inquirers. Among the rest are a catalogue of his library soon after the death of his father, and various lists of the books actually read by the owner of the library between the years 1606-14. They are worthy of notice for the light they throw upon Drummond's mind and habits. The books marked as read number in all 220, including much poetry, both English and French. The contents of his library in 1610 were 267 Latin books, 35 Greek, 11 Hebrew, 61 Italian, 8 Spanish, 120 French, 50 English—a very good collection for a country gentleman of the seventeenth century, and one the linguistic proportions of which are useful to remind us how much a library of two or three centuries ago differed from a modern one.[1]

For two years Drummond seems to have read and vaguely meditated without visible result. He would probably have continued to do so longer but for the death

[1] These details are taken from Professor Masson's *Life of Drummond*,

of Prince Henry in 1612, an event which set almost every Scottish pen scribbling, and a good many English to boot. *Teares for the Death of Mœliades*, the earliest published of Drummond's works, appeared in 1613. It is a piece of about two hundred lines, of little interest or value in itself, but graceful and full of promise. It brought the author into poetic contact with Sir William Alexander, whose piece on the same subject appeared the year before. Drummond shows himself from the outset the better poet of the two; but the fame of Alexander, who was senior both as man and as author, was so much better established that when, in 1614, the pair met at Menstrie, Drummond felt himself honoured by the regard of his fellow-poet. It is to the credit of Alexander that he generously recognised the power of the younger man. The two men became fast friends, kept up a literary correspondence, and wrote sonnets and other poetic compliments to one another under the names of Damon and Alexis.

A more important event in Drummond's life, the most important perhaps of all for literature, was his meeting with a daughter of Cunningham of Barns, which seems to have taken place about this time. He fell in love with the lady, wooed and won her; the marriage day was fixed, but before it came she died of a fever. Drummond's genuine and deep affection for her and the tragic close of their love had a profound effect upon his poetry. It strengthened and confirmed the melancholy which, implanted by nature, had been nourished by the quietude of Hawthornden. It fed his mystic idealism; it gave him, both during the lady's life and after she was dead, a real subject for his muse; and thus it did much to save him from that tendency to conceits

which was creeping like a canker into English poetry. This passion is the source of nearly all the poet's next publication, the *Poems: Amorous, Funerall, Divine, Pastorall*, etc., which was issued in 1616. These poems are Drummond's most valuable contribution to literature. The series of pieces commemorating his love is divided into two parts, one prior, the other subsequent to her death. Together they contain most of what is truly excellent in the author's poetry; only occasionally in later years did he rise as high. His favourite measure, and that in which he was most successful, was the sonnet, not always constructed on the strict Italian model, but generally approximating to it, and showing more regard for its rules and spirit than most o the English sonnets loosely so called of the age of Elizabeth The best of Drummond's pieces entitle him to a place in the first rank of English sonneteers; and it is to be wondered that he has not, in virtue of these exquisite poems, taken a higher place in the rolls of literature. A few specimens will give the best idea of the grace and harmonious beauty of Drummond's verse. The first embodies a conception never long absent from his mind, and here prettily turned to account to celebrate his love:—

"That learned Grecian, who did so excel
In knowledge passing sense, that he is nam'd
Of all the after-worlds divine, doth tell,
That at the time when first our souls are fram'd,
Ere in these mansions blind they come to dwell,
They live bright rays of that eternal light,
And others see, know, love, in heaven's great height,
Not toil'd with aught to reason doth rebel.
Most true it is, for straight at the first sight

My mind me told, that in some other place
It elsewhere saw the idea of that face,
And lov'd a love of heavenly pure delight;
No wonder now I feel so fair a flame,
Sith I her lov'd ere on this earth she came."

It is however in the second part, where he laments the death of his mistress, that Drummond is at his best. There are perhaps no sonnets in it which can be pronounced decisively superior to one or two in the former part, but it contains a much greater proportion of excellent work. The poet generally chooses to approach the subject of his love indirectly, but the following is expressly devoted to it:—

"Sweet soul, which in the April of thy years
So to enrich the heaven mad'st poor this round,
And now with golden rays of glory crown'd
Most blest abid'st above the sphere of spheres;
If heavenly laws, alas! have not thee bound
From looking to this globe that all upbears,
If ruth and pity there above be found,
O deign to lend a look unto those tears.
Do not disdain, dear ghost, this sacrifice,
And though I raise not pillars to thy praise,
Mine offerings take; let this for me suffice,
My heart a living pyramid I raise;
And whilst kings' tombs with laurels flourish green
Thine shall with myrtle and these flowers be seen."

This again illustrates Drummond's feeling for nature and the manner in which he wove it in with the idea of his love:—

"Sweet Spring, thou turn'st with all thy goodly train,
Thy head with flames, thy mantle bright with flowers;
The zephyrs curl the green locks of the plain,
The clouds for joy in pearls weep down their show'rs.
Thou turn'st, sweet youth, but, ah! my pleasant hours

And happy days with thee come not again;
The sad memorials only of my pain
Do with thee turn, which turn my sweet in sours.
Thou art the same which still thou wast before,
Delicious, wanton, amiable, fair;
But she, whose breath embalm'd thy wholesome air,
Is gone; nor gold, nor gems, her can restore.
Neglected virtue, seasons go and come,
While thine forgot lie closed in a tomb."

But though Drummond is happiest in the sonnet, he can manage other measures with effect. The following song reads like Herrick at his best, though it is more serious than Herrick generally is:—

"O Pan, Pan, winter is fallen in our May,
Turn'd is in night our day;
Forsake thy pipe, a sceptre take to thee,
Thy locks disgarland, thou black Jove shalt be.
Thy flocks do leave the meads,
And, loathing three-leav'd grass, hold up their heads;
The streams not glide now with a gentle roar,
Nor birds sing as before;
Hills stand with clouds, like mourners, veil'd in black,
And owls on cabin roofs foretel our wrack.
That zephyr every year
So soon was heard to sigh in forests here,
It was for her; that wrapt in gowns of green,
Meads were so early seen,
That in the saddest months oft sung the merles,
It was for her; for her trees dropt forth pearls.
That proud and stately courts
Did envy those our shades, and calm resorts,
It was for her; and she is gone, O woe!
Woods cut again do grow,
Bud doth the rose and daisy, winter done,
But we, once dead, no more do see the sun."

In his later poetry Drummond is on the whole less

successful. The *Flowers of Sion*, published in 1623 along with the *Cypresse Grove*, contains indeed some fine pieces, one of which, the sonnet *For the Baptist*, may be quoted as illustrating a side of the poet's mind and work which is barely represented in the earlier poems :—

"The last and greatest herald of heaven's King,
Girt with rough skins, hies to the deserts wild,
Among that savage brood the woods forth bring,
Which he than man more harmless found and mild :
His food was locusts, and what young doth spring,
With honey that from virgin hives distill'd ;
Parch'd body, hollow eyes, some uncouth thing
Made him appear long since from earth exil'd.
There burst he forth : 'All ye, whose hopes rely
On God, with me amidst these deserts mourn ;
Repent, repent, and from old errors turn.'
Who listen'd to his voice, obey'd his cry ?
Only the echoes which he made relent,
Rung from their marble caves, 'Repent, Repent !'"

As a rule however the ideas of the later poems are but repetitions of those contained in the earlier, a fact which points to the conclusion that Drummond's powers, though exquisite, were narrow in their range. This criticism is essentially true of the fine *Hymn of the Ascension*: it is still more true of the *Hymn of the Fairest Fair*, a characteristic poem embodying its author's philosophy of the universe. For the rest, Drummond's poems include a collection of epigrams and madrigals, some clear, some coarse, few remarkable ; a number of miscellaneous pieces, some of which are interesting for their bearing on contemporary literature ; and a collection of posthumous poems, many of them relating to the politics of his time, but otherwise of little value. There is also ascribed to Drummond the

curious and amusing macaronic poem, *Polemo-Middinia*, to which his name was first attached in the edition published at Oxford in 1691 under the editorship of Gibson, subsequently Bishop of London. The first edition known, which was published at Edinburgh in 1584, was anonymous; and there is no evidence except tradition to connect Drummond with a composition utterly foreign to his usual tone and habit of mind.

Meanwhile the fame of Drummond was steadily growing and his reputation becoming established as the first man of letters in Scotland. The visit of James to his ancient kingdom in 1617 gave the poet a fresh opportunity of playing the courtier, and the result of his labours was the poem, *Forth Feasting*. It is startling to find the pacific, not to say cowardly sovereign described as the "Mars-daunting King"; but if the adulation is gross, it is no worse than that of others in Drummond's generation and the preceding one. The poets at that time seem to have differed chiefly, not in independence, but in the degrees of ingenuity with which their flattery was bestowed; and in this respect Drummond stands high. None of the poems composed upon the occasion of this visit can rival *Forth Feasting*. Its rhymed decasyllabic lines are smooth, polished, and pointed to a degree which at times almost anticipates Pope. The whole is skilful and full of fancy, and the close is really eloquent.

Towards the close of 1618, or in the beginning of 1619, occurred that visit from Ben Jonson which has given rise to endless controversy with regard to Drummond's character. The admirers of Jonson accuse the Scottish poet of playing the spy upon and traducing the great

dramatist who was his guest and who opened his heart in the confidence of friendship. It cannot be denied that the character at the end of the conversations is ungenerously drawn, but the conversations themselves are sufficiently innocent. There is no evidence, nor likelihood, that they were meant for publication; nor were they published till long after the writer's death. It is no doubt an uncomfortable reflection for great men that their most confidential and least considered remarks may be set down in a permanent record; and perhaps it would be wiser on the part of the listener to think that he has no right to take notes of conversations. But he who does so is not necessarily a traitor. The bitterness of Drummond's own remarks on Jonson is probably due to the angularities of that rough and massive character fretting a disposition retired, delicate, and somewhat finical. Silence would have been in better taste; but to take private notes and to add, perhaps in a moment of pique, an estimate of character, is not a grave offence. Gifford, in his zeal for Jonson, exaggerated the fault of Drummond.

Shortly after the publication of the *Flowers of Sion* the life of Drummond seems to have undergone a change. Little is known about him until in 1626 we find him unexpectedly amongst inventors; and, being a man of peace, he must needs contrive instruments of war. In 1627 he obtained a patent for the construction of a variety of military engines, and appears to have given much attention to these projects. The poetic *Paraeneticon* which he wrote for Sir Thomas Kellie's military treatise, *Pallas Armata*, shows that his interest in such matters was not limited to his own devices. In 1632 he married. A

political paper written in the same year on the subject of the earldom of Stratherne, and some pieces in verse occasioned by the visit of Charles I. to Scotland in 1633, seemed to hold out some faint promise of a return to literary interests. The disturbances, however, which arose shortly after this visit proved an effectual and permanent barrier to Drummond's converse with the muses. He continued indeed to write occasional verses, but never afterwards gave his whole mind to poetry, and never produced anything quite worthy of his earlier promise. He wrote mostly in prose and upon politics, in the interest of the royalist party. Among these prose works is an ambitious and high-flown essay entitled *Irene*, described on the title-page as "a remonstrance for concord, amity, and love, amongst his Majesty's subjects." A more sustained work is the *History of the Lives and Reigns of the Five James's*. It was finished about 1644, but not published till eleven years later. Drummond wrote nothing more of moment, and died in 1649.

The prose of Drummond does not fall within the subject of this essay; and all that he wrote in those years of turmoil may be passed over without criticism. There is however an earlier essay, which, though prose in form, has so much of the spirit of poetry that it ought to be mentioned here. This is the *Cypresse Grove*, already mentioned as having been published along with the *Flowers of Sion*. In this, unquestionably the most perfect specimen of Drummond's prose, the author happily follows the bent of his own mind, unburdened by any practical purpose. It is an essay on death, written in the spirit of Plato and ending in a dream corresponding to the Platonic myth.

A number of particular hints are borrowed from Bacon's essay on Death; one passage may be traced to Ben Jonson's well-known lines, "It is not growing like a tree"; and others to other writers of the time. But Drummond has made the thoughts his own, and has woven them into a prose style often beautiful, and at its highest quite equal to the best of his poetry. The essay however as a whole is uneven. The language is at times laboured to a degree almost painful, the imagery is frequently overwrought, and sometimes degenerates into conceits. The following passage is a specimen of Drummond at his best:—

"If on the great Theatre of this Earth amongst the numberless Number of men, *To dy* were only proper to thee and thine, then undoubtedly thou hadst reason to repine at so severe and partial a Law: But since it is a Necessity, from which never any Age by-past hath been exempted, and unto which they which be, and so many as are to come, are thralled (no Consequent of Life being more common and familiar), why shouldst thou with unprofitable and nought-availing Stubbornness, oppose so inevitable and necessary a Condition? This is the High-way of Mortality and our general Home: Behold what millions have trod it before thee, what Multitudes shall after thee, with them which at that same Instant run. In so universal a Calamity (if Death be one) private Complaints cannot be heard: With so many Royal Palaces, it is no loss to see thy poor Cabin burn. Shall the Heavens stay their ever-rolling wheels (for what is the motion of them but the motion of a swift and ever-whirling wheel, which twineth forth, and again uprolleth our Life) and hold still Time to prolong thy miserable Days, as if the highest of their

Working were to do Homage unto thee? Thy Death is a Pace of the Order of this *All*, a Part of the Life of this World; for while the World is the World, some Creatures must dy, and others take life."

This piece strengthens the impression derived from a study of the poems, that while Drummond was to a rare degree perfect within his own limits, his range was narrow. It is further evident that there was a certain effeminacy about his mind which made him largely the creature of circumstance. The conditions of his life were long favourable to his genius; and even in his later days the distractions under which he personally suffered would not have checked the productiveness of a robuster genius; for he was not, like Milton, a participant in the stormy events of the time. But Drummond was a hot-house plant, and even a slight breath of untempered air shrivelled him up. Probably however there is little to regret in the fact that his best poetry was all written before he was thirty. It may be doubted whether he could have done much more than repeat what he had already said. There would have been under other conditions more sonnets, sweet, musical, and melancholy, perhaps more essays on themes of mysticism; but there would have been no great poem. For a short flight Drummond can scarcely be surpassed, but his wing soon tires. His most felicitous strokes are often single lines; as in the epithets of spring in one of the sonnets already quoted, "Delicious, wanton, amiable, fair"; or, from another sonnet, "The stately comeliness of forests old." Such lines combine artistic skill with truth of description.

It is worthy of remark that both these specimens of

Drummond's happiest art have reference to external nature. Whether it was due to his long retirement at Hawthornden or not may be hard to say, but the fact is certain that he had a truer, more sensitive, and more catholic taste in regard to natural scenes than any of his contemporaries, English or Scotch. Professor Veitch has remarked that he was the first to find beauty in one of the most beautiful of natural objects, a snow-clad mountain. And while he did not shrink from aspects of nature associated with ideas of cold and physical discomfort, he revelled in those which call up more pleasant reminiscences. Probably his references to nature would be regarded by some critics as artificial. But they are artificial only in the sense of being the work of a painstaking artist, who does not permit his art to degenerate into artifice or to interfere with truth.

It is not now difficult to characterise the poetry of the first half of the seventeenth century. It is in the first place not Scotch at all, except in the sense that the authors of it were born in Scotland. There were a few writers of the time, like Sir William Mure of Rowallan, who retained some flavour of the soil; but native Scottish poetry during almost the whole of the century was as near as possible extinct. Among the Anglicised writers there were several of more than respectable gifts; but only one, Drummond, whose achievements entitle him to a high rank among poets. Even in him there is not sufficient vigour to win for him a place among the greatest. Like most imitative literature, the work of these men is essentially second-rate. The force of the older poetry had been lost along with its rudeness. But later on even this imitative work also dwindled away, and it was not replaced

by anything original. The period from the beginning of the Civil War to the Revolution was the most barren in the annals of Scottish literature. Poetry almost disappeared. In prose the activity was purely theological; and, though Leighton is a noble exception, the theology was generally of an inferior character.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE POPULAR BALLADS.

JUST upon the eve of the union of the Parliaments there issued from the printing press of James Watson of Edinburgh the first part of a work of comparatively humble pretensions, but of great significance. It was entitled *A Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems, both Ancient and Modern.* The three parts of which it ultimately consisted were published in the years 1706, 1709, and 1711. The contents range from genuinely beautiful poetry down to something little better than doggerel. They consist partly of specimens of popular poetry, the ballads and songs current throughout the country, partly of the effusions of more learned poets. It is the former class of pieces which gives to the collection its peculiar importance. We find in it the first evidence in Scotland of an interest in such matters sufficiently wide to justify a commercial venture; and the spread of this interest may be taken as one of the proofs of the gradual lightening of the theological yoke which had pressed so heavily upon literature during the previous century. Doubtless it was partly due also to English example. Scotch music, Scotch songs, and Scotch ballads had become popular in London; and Durfey and his

brethren did their best to supply the demand by imitations. Their imitations won acceptance not only in England, but in the country from which they professed to have sprung. Transparent as the fiction generally was—as regards the words at least—it passed current; and time has made it difficult in some cases to tell whether the verses were originally English or were founded upon some older Scottish version. The fashion of London reacted upon Edinburgh. Everybody who was at all interested in such matters knew that Scottish tradition and old half-forgotten documents held the materials for volumes superior to Durfey's. Watson set the example, and he was soon followed by others. Ramsay explored the rich mine of the Bannatyne MS. for his *Evergreen;* and in *The Tea Table Miscellany* supplied a collection of pieces suitable to the kind of social gatherings indicated by the title. Soon afterwards came the *Orpheus Caledonius* of William Thomson; and from that time forward there has been a continuous series of collections of a similar kind. The character of these collections in respect of accuracy of research is a question by itself: it is enough here to note that their appearance indicated a renewed interest in the old poetry of the country, and especially an interest such as had never before existed in the popular poetry of ballad and song. The songs were the first to attract attention. We have to wait until the publication of Percy's *Reliques* before we find evidence of any wide interest in that species of popular poetry which was meant to be recited or chanted. There is however no doubt that the ballads as a body are older than the songs; and while songs of the true Scottish type continue to be written to this day, the

spontaneous ballad, made for and heard by the people, long ago ceased to be composed. Historically, therefore, the ballads must be considered prior to the songs.

The subject both of the ballads and of the songs of Scotland is extremely difficult. Their excellence and the importance of their history would now be admitted on all hands; but when an attempt is made to trace them back, it is found that facts constantly elude the grasp. The reason is that old MS. authorities are so rare and insufficient. Scott, Jamieson, Finlay, Maidment, Buchan, and others have done an inestimable service to the literature of the country in preserving the fragments of its old ballad poetry; but they had often no better authority than the recitation of some old woman, who preserved the tradition of the district; and none of these men, except perhaps Maidment, rose to the modern standard of absolute and literal fidelity to the oldest or best authority. Their versions are frequently the result of collation, and sometimes they are interpolated. The southern ballads, inferior in quality and interest, have the advantage, historically speaking, of having been earlier written or printed than those of the north.

In the absence of written documents it is obvious that dates can rarely be even approximately fixed. The test of the style and tone of thought is, it is true, generally sufficient to distinguish between the genuine ballad and the modern imitation. Into the latter there creeps almost inevitably some conception or turn of phrase which betrays its origin; and numerous as have been the changes introduced unconsciously by the reciters, they are different in kind from those which indicate the handiwork of the

modern editor. The reciters were too simple-minded to invent poetic graces. From the test of style however it would be dangerous to infer more than that a particular ballad is old or that it is modern. Nor can very much be learnt from the language. Far too great importance has been in recent years attached to this test. If it could be trusted, almost all the Scottish ballads must be pronounced quite modern. But it is clear that compositions handed down by tradition must undergo modifications from age to age, gradually assimilating their language to the speech of the time. Within certain limits, valuable results may no doubt be reached by the study of the language of a ballad. The survival in verses orally transmitted of an obsolete word or grammatical form affords a strong presumption of the antiquity of the piece in which it occurs; but the *absence* of antiquated phraseology is far from proving modern composition.

In determining the age of the ballads the chief reliance must be placed upon such of them as embody or refer to historical facts. The limits of time within which unrhymed oral tradition is capable of preserving the memory of events have been fairly well ascertained. Facts may live in this way for about three generations; but only the most important will survive so long, and these merely in outline. If then we find a knowledge of long past events handed down by means of ballads, the natural inference is that those ballads, unless they are mere imitations, must have been written shortly after the occurrence of the events they commemorate. Judged by this test, the ballads of Scotland stretch back over a period of not less than six hundred years. The earliest

authenticated event recorded in a Scotch ballad is that on which *Sir Patrick Spens* is founded. It is true that the pretensions of *Sir Patrick Spens* to the character of an old historical ballad have been impugned. Finlay, in his *Scottish Historical and Romantic Ballads*, first hinted doubt; and Laing in a note to Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum* suggested that it was written by Lady Wardlaw. It might be thought then that serious doubt must rest upon the character of this ballad; but in reality the ascription of it to Lady Wardlaw is a striking instance of the credulity which often accompanies excessive scepticism. It counts for little that the localities, Dunfermline and Aberdour,[1] are in the neighbourhood of Sir H. Wardlaw's seat; nor is it difficult to explain the mention of "cork-heeled shoon," and other objects unfamiliar in the Scotland of the thirteenth century; for no one ever denied that ballads are liable to be corrupted in recitation. On the other hand, the evidence in favour of the historical character of *Sir Patrick* is strong. The incidents of the ballad agree so well with a story preserved in the *Scotichronicon* that the only natural conclusion is that the ballad-maker and the historian founded upon the same facts. Unless therefore the ballad-maker was in this case a person of learning who borrowed from history, he must have lived so near the events as to be intimately acquainted with them. But, notwithstanding the Lady Wardlaw hypothesis, there

[1] It is of course very doubtful if the Aberdour referred to in the ballad is the one which would naturally have occurred to Lady Wardlaw; but the critics seized upon the fact that she lived near a place of that name.

is not a scrap of evidence, nothing but a baseless conjecture, connecting any such person with the ballad. It seems as fully established as it could well be on any but ancient documentary evidence that *Sir Patrick Spens* carries us back to the year 1281. Certainly no existing version, in its present form, is as old or nearly as old as this; but if we accept it as a genuine old ballad we are driven to the conclusion that the versions now current have come down from a very ancient prototype, and have probably only undergone the changes inseparable from the mode of their transmission.

But *Sir Patrick Spens* stands alone. An interval of more than a hundred years elapsed before the occurrence of the next event commemorated in ballad poetry. The ravages of time sufficiently account for the blank. There were, according to Fordun, songs made about the adventures of Wallace in France. Rude fragments of rhyme still exist referring to one or two incidents in the struggle with England; and it may be assumed that the principal events of an active and exciting period were not left unsung. But after *Sir Patrick Spens* there survives nothing that can be called a ballad until we come to those which relate to the Battle of Otterburn, fought in 1388. Two sets of ballads, those of the Hunting of the Cheviot and those of Otterburn itself, are commonly associated with this great Border fight; but probably they refer to distinct events. If so, we have in the Chevy Chase ballads another historical thread leading us back a long way. It is remarkable that in the case of Otterburn the English version is older than the Scottish; while the Scottish version of the Hunting of

the Cheviot has perished altogether. That a Scottish ballad on the subject existed seems to be proved by *The Complaynt of Scotland.* In the list of songs there given we find *The hunttis of cheuet.* It is, no doubt, possible that this may refer to the English ballad; but in view of the spirit of *The Complaynt* it is highly improbable. The author has certainly quoted English songs as sung by the shepherds; but they are songs which do not carry their nationality on their face. A Scot so patriotic and so bitterly hostile to England would never have included in his list a composition ascribing victory to the English. Of the Scottish ballads of the battle of Otterburn none in its present form is ancient; but there are references by the author of *The Complaynt of Scotland* and by David Hume of Godscroft, who wrote in the early part of the seventeenth century, which prove that at least as early as their day there existed a Scottish ballad, or perhaps more than one, on the subject of Otterburn. The probability is that the story of the battle was "done into rhyme" soon after it took place.

In this way, by means of the facts which the minstrels have recorded in their verse, it is possible to trace back the line of the ballads for a very long time. There are however only a few to which any considerable antiquity can be ascribed. It is not until we reach the sixteenth century that we can point to a tolerable body of ballad literature; and then we are upon the verge of a great decline in quality. Of the numerous ballads which can be proved to belong to the seventeenth century few indeed are excellent. The Covenanters had

not the gift of song, and their opponents were little better.

But it is necessary to guard against the assumption that because the historical ballads are those which afford the best ground for determining age they are therefore the oldest. On the contrary, it is probable that the ballads of romance and superstition are of still greater antiquity. All that is known of the development of the human mind supports the belief that the unseen world sooner interests and more profoundly moves the imagination than past facts. On a tribe just emerging from barbarism the past has but slight hold, for the historical sense is not yet awakened; but such a tribe is deeply stirred by the sense of the supernatural. *A priori* therefore we should expect to find tales of superstition at an earlier date than ballads of history; and this is borne out by the facts so far as they can be ascertained. The extreme antiquity of the superstitions embodied in the ballads is beyond dispute. Stories of fairies, monsters, and goblins run back to a very dim past. They are so old as to be the property, not of a particular tribe or nation, but almost of the human race. In this case however it is necessary to distinguish between the question of the origin of the tale and that of the antiquity of the ballad which preserves its memory. And between the historical ballads and the ballads of superstition there is this important distinction, that while historical facts, unversified, will, as has been already observed, live in popular tradition only a limited time, there is practically no limit to the vitality of superstitions in any form. While, therefore, we must suppose that historical facts, in

order to be carried in the popular memory, must have been thrown into poetic form at no great distance from the time of their occurrence, there is no reason why superstitions may not have passed current for centuries in ordinary prose narrative before they were made the theme of a ballad. The backward limit of the ballads of superstition must consequently be fixed, so far as it can be fixed at all, not by the antiquity of the superstition itself, but rather by reference to the historical ballads and by any casual evidence that may exist with respect to particular tales. The line of the historical ballads may apparently be traced back to about the end of the thirteenth century. The ballads of superstition, there is reason to suppose, took their rise some time earlier. But once more the gap between the probable origin and the earliest documentary evidence is enormous. *The Tale of the Young Tamlane* appears in the list of the *Complaynt of Scotland.* It may have been different from the ballad of *Tamlane* in the Minstrelsy; but the name affords a reasonable presumption that the one is connected with the other. Though Scott's version, which is the result of collation, is considerably modernised, it probably springs from an older set of verses. But the ballads of this class which give greatest assurance of antiquity are those which relate to Thomas the Rhymer, and that just because they have a historical setting. Thomas himself lived in the twelfth century. The oldest poems recording his intercourse with Fairyland and his prophecies are preserved in the Thornton MS. at Lincoln, which dates about 1430-40. But this version is certainly English; and as all the MS.

authority is southern, it would be rash to build much on those poems with reference to the poetry of the north. It is however significant that this, the earliest assignable date for the ballads of superstition, does lead us into a remoter past than the historical ballads.

There are still other ballads, poems of sentiment and love, which have no basis either in history or superstition. These present little that is valuable for the purpose of fixing dates. They are like the ballads of superstition in the fact that as a rule they afford no evidence of their starting-points. They are unlike them in this, that though the emotions they express are primary elements of human character, they are not so early the subject of verse as are either facts of history or conceptions about a spirit-life. Ballads of this description, therefore, are probably as a class the most recent of all.

There seems then to be sufficient ground to conclude with confidence that ever since the dawn of national literature the Lowland Scotch have nursed and cherished a popular poetry as genuine as that recognised by the learned, and often higher in tone. It is true that the primitive forms of this poetry are unknown to us in their purity; but unless we adopt a hypothesis of wholesale modern forgery, like the forgeries of Chatterton and Macpherson, we must assume the substantial fidelity of most of the modern versions to an ancient authority. In other words, most of the Scottish ballads are genuine pieces of popular poetry, not imitations, and some of them are in substance of great antiquity. It would no doubt be more satisfactory if it were possible to point to documents in support of these conclusions; but comparison with the English

ballads suggests the question whether the absence of such documents is purely matter for regret. There are few of the English ballads, particularly those of the south, which can be ranked for poetic merit with the Scottish ballads. Why this should be so it is difficult to say. Certainly it cannot be that the race which, after the Greek, has proved itself the most poetical of all races, was wanting in the power and spirit from which fine popular poetry springs. Perhaps the conjecture of Mr. Lang, in Ward's *English Poets*, is the most probable that could be advanced—that the English ballads suffered at the hands of half-educated editors, printers, and transcribers, who, thinking to improve, refined away the fire and energy and imagination of the old minstrels. If so, it is really matter for congratulation that the northern ballads in so many cases existed only in the memory of the people until they were taken down by men of taste and genius. We can spare the antiquity in consideration of the beauty.

The subjects of the ballads are almost as various as the interests of humanity. The wars between England and Scotland, clan-feuds, moss-trooping raids, captures and rescues, are all in turn the theme of the minstrel. All the stronger passions—love, hatred, jealousy, revenge—become likewise the subject of poetical treatment. But however various the subjects may be, there is much uniformity in the mode of handling them. The true ballad always takes the form of a narrative; and this is one of the points in which it differs from the song. The song is primarily the expression of sentiment. The singer is the centre of his own verse, and, if facts are introduced, they are subsidiary; but in the ballad the minstrel is merely the medium

for giving poetic expression to some outward fact or event. His reflections therefore, if any, must be subordinate to the narrative. The ballad is also, in accordance with its popular character, marked by simplicity, both in its substance and its external form. Its metrical structure is unpretentions and not very varied. The thought is without complexity, inartificial, and, to a large extent, common property. There are conventional endings, conventional methods of sending and of receiving news, conventional ways of acting in certain recurrent circumstances. These conventionalities serve various purposes. As the commentators on Homer have often pointed out, they serve to give relief to the reciter or chanter; they are a kind of level ground over which he can pace mechanically without strain on the memory. They also frequently mark time, as it were, for the audience. The familiar crisis in the fight, the familiar action on receipt of important tidings, the familiar details of the lady's beauty or magnificent array, all these and many more help the listener to note the progress of the tale. They are almost like the shifting of the scene in a drama. But the main purpose of repetitions is to win sympathy by a kind of appeal to the whole of ballad literature. No ballad stands quite alone. It is a member of a class; and the common parts are a sort of symbol of kinship. Absolute novelty would be the reverse of a merit. The audience would miss the well-known lines, and their appreciation of that which was new would be lessened.

It is however only by this community of spirit that the ballads are united. Not infrequently, it is true, several are found referring to the same person or the same event or

series of events. In some instances they are versions of a common original, in others they recount independently different though related incidents. But they cannot be unified, and they are seldom to be regarded as continuations one of another. There nowhere exists among the ballads of Scotland such a series of connected pieces as even the English ballads of Robin Hood, much less series of ballads which exhibit unity of composition. Popular poetry showed no tendency, in Scotland at least, to develop into the epic; and if the Homeric poems are to be looked upon as ballads woven together, they present a phenomenon very different from any to be found in this country. It follows that the literary capabilities of popular poetry are limited. The ballad cannot treat any complex subject. Though less strictly bounded in length and in range than the song, it is hardly more fitted to develop many sides of a theme.

Nevertheless, the ballad is capable, within its own limits, of rising to the highest excellence; and the old ballads of Scotland are peculiarly rich in poetic beauties. The ballad-makers, by the sheer force of simplicity and truth, succeeded in picturing nature when more ambitious literary artists failed. In their handling of the supernatural they show a profound knowledge of the springs of character. The best of them betray a strong imaginative sympathy with their subject, by virtue of which they rise from time to time to heights of style far above the "aureate terms" of more pretentious poets. By an unconscious but true artistic sense, they are often found preparing for some important point by giving it just that setting which is best suited to bring it into prominence. And as they lived in an atmosphere of

rude chivalry, there shines through their strange and faulty code of morals the constant light of high and generous thoughts, dauntless courage, fidelity in friendship, and at times even sympathy with the weak and generosity to enemies; in short, all the characteristic virtues of a strong race slowly rising through troublous times to a more refined civilisation.

There are probably no ballads so rich in good poetry as those which deal with the superstitions of the people. This is the more remarkable as the great mass of unpoetised popular superstition is mean and even repulsive. Though Shakespeare could use witches with supreme effect, there is in the ordinary belief in witchcraft hardly a single idea which is not tainted with vulgarity. There are in it elements of coarseness and a strong infusion of the grotesque; but more prevalent than either is the merely commonplace. The means by which the witches travel through the air, their transformations and those of their master, their meetings with him and the details of their intercourse, all bespeak poverty of imagination. Their gruesome dealings with the dead are a more promising theme: they are capable of being made awful, though not beautiful. But there is little in the whole range of the popular creed of witchcraft for which so much can be said. The poet who takes up this subject must in effect make his supernatural for himself. The relation between his work and its foundation is similar to that between a play of Shakespeare and the original story, so often poor and sapless, on which he grafts it. In the inanities of vulgar superstition there is no poetry, nor any seeming promise of poetry. Far different in its power over the mind is the

supernatural of the ballads; yet it has grown out of common tales of wonder, many of which are in their elements beggarly enough, and nearly all of which must be supposed to have sprung from rude originals. Nay, when the ballads are examined, it frequently proves that the charm lies, not in the superstition itself, but in the circumstances with which it is clothed and the language in which it is expressed. All the more remarkable is the proof of the power of the ballad-maker, who, out of the most unpromising materials and by the simplest changes, has evolved the beauty of poetry.

Of all superstitions, those concerning the fairies or elves are among the most frequently repeated. It is not necessary here to discuss the nature and attributes of these beings: much information on the subject is contained in Scott's elaborate introduction to the ballad of *Young Tamlane*, and it has been amply dealt with since his time. They are however the centre of some of the most charming pieces of ballad poetry. The ballads of Thomas the Rhymer turn upon the connexion between Thomas and Fairyland, and contain some exquisite and well-known verses about his intercourse with the queen of that realm. The idea of the middle path between the broad and narrow ways is very beautiful—the "pleasant path that winds across the lily leven." The ballad of *Young Tamlane* itself affords specimens second to none of this species of poetry. Unfortunately, the version in Scott's *Minstrelsy*, which was the first complete one, has an unsatisfactory history. It is the result of a collation of earlier printed fragments with a copy in the Glenriddell MSS. and with several recitations from tradition. Further,

some verses are added from yet another copy obtained from a gentleman unnamed, which, we are cautiously told, "is said to be very ancient." It is not to be wondered at therefore that some parts of Scott's version bear the modern stamp; but there can be little doubt that the substance of the tale is of considerable antiquity. The subject is the adventures of a lady with a knight transformed into a fairy. She is the daughter of Dunbar, Earl March, and he the son of Randolph, Earl Murray. He avows himself well content to dwell in Elfish Land, except that every seven years "they pay the teind to hell"; and, fearing that he may be chosen, he instructs the lady how she may win him back to earth. The poetical climax is reached when the lady makes her way in the dark to the solitary trysting-place, where she is to abide all that the unearthly cavalcade can do to shake her nerve.

"Gloomy, gloomy was the night,
And eiry was the way,
As fair Janet, in her green mantle,
To Miles Cross she did gae.

. . . . . .

"Betwixt the hours of twelve and one,
A north wind tore the bent;
And straight she heard strange elrich sounds
Upon that wind which went.

"About the dead hour o' the night,
She heard the bridles ring;
And Janet was as glad o' that
As any earthly thing."

These verses are unfortunately among the doubtful parts of the ballad; but whether they be ancient or modern,

nothing could better show the terrible pressure of the supernatural upon the human heart than the lines which express so simply the relief brought by the ring of the fairy bridles. The sound at least was suggestive of earth; and everything else—the darkness, the solitude, above all the purpose with which the lady was there—tended to fill the mind with thoughts of the weird and ghostly.

Of more common occurrence than even the superstitions of the fairies are those which relate to the dead. The return of the lover's ghost to his mistress, demanding back his plighted faith and troth, sometimes followed by the lady's visit to the open grave, is an incident which shows the belief in the persistence of human relations beyond the bounds of life. The supposed effect of the presence of a murderer upon the corpse is well known, and the idea is widely spread. It is sometimes used in the ballads as a means of discriminating guilt from innocence. An example will be found in *Earl Richard*, a ballad of terrible revenge for slighted love. The same ballad illustrates also the more impressive superstition of the corpse-lights marking the place where the murdered body lies. It has been sunk in the "wan water" of Clyde; but no care of search by day avails. The trial by night is crowned with success, for

> "Where that sackless knight lay slain,
> The candles burned bright."

The conditions on which the dead are allowed to revisit the scenes of life are laid down carefully, and with a general uniformity. The connexion between day and life, between night and death, suggests itself to every imaginative mind, and finds expression in the poetry of all nations and ages. Cock-crow, as the herald of dawn, is the limit of ghostly

liberty. Sometimes this is put in most expressive language:—

"The cock doth craw, the day doth daw,
The channerin' worm doth chide;
Gin we be mist out o' our place,
A sair pain we maun bide."

The spirits of the blest, though less frequently than those which have earned an eternal doom, also wander back to earth. They likewise appear only in the night; but they bear the symbol of their happier fate in the form of a cap or garland of birch. This garland is worn by the sons of the wife of Usher's Well:—

"It neither grew in syke nor ditch
Nor yet in ony sheugh;
But at the gates o' Paradise
That birk grew fair eneugh."

The spirits doomed to torment are surrounded by memorials of their sins, and have hell-hounds for the companions of their grave.

No superstitions of this class are more impressive than those which relate to the "waking" of the still unburied body, especially when the death has been by violence; and nowhere are they better expressed than in the fine ballad of *Young Benjie* in Scott's *Minstrelsy*. This ballad gives the story of true love leading to jealousy, and jealousy ending in crime. The brothers of the maiden, Marjorie, find her drowned body, and resolve to take the weird means of discovering the criminal:—

"'The night it is her low lykewake,
The morn her burial day,
And we maun watch at mirk midnight,
And hear what she will say.'

"Wi' doors ajar and candle light,
And torches burning clear,
The streikit corpse, till still midnight,
They waked, but naething hear.

"About the middle o' the night
The cocks began to craw;
And at the dead hour o' the night,
The corpse began to thraw."

In Scott's introduction to the ballad will be found particulars relating to the beliefs here indicated. Leaving the door ajar was one of the means for giving the spirit an opportunity of revisiting the body.

These are but a few examples of the numberless forms of belief connected with the unseen world. Some of those beliefs are merely grotesque, like the changing of a lady into some loathsome monster, a "laidly worm" or fiery dragon; but even with such fancies there are mixed ideas of beauty, such as the common one of restoration by the kiss of a knight. Other incidents, as, for example, the means by which Cospatrick discovers the character of the lady he has wedded, can hardly be said to do more than feed the vulgar appetite for wonder. In such cases the popular superstition is simply versified without being transformed into poetry. But always and in almost all forms superstition has an irresistible fascination for the minstrels, and as a rule their imagination glows and brightens under its influence. Doubtless they themselves felt it most profoundly, and knew that they could most surely reach their hearers by such means.

But the life which the minstrels knew and which their audience led was far too active to be represented by a collection of superstitions. Its energy, its scenes of viol-

ence, its "sturt and strife," are faithfully reflected in the ballads. The oldest of the historical ballads have been already mentioned in the discussion of the antiquity of this species of composition; but there are many other ballads which, whether truly historical or not, have action for their subject, the exploits of heroes generally real, though sometimes not to be identified. Ballads of this class have a long history. It has been seen that they start early: they also last late. When that poetic impulse which produced the more imaginative ballads of romance had almost passed away, it was still possible to string rhymes upon a solid basis of fact; and the jealousy of the Reformation and the Covenant in respect of profane poetry had less effect upon this class than upon any other. But the older ballads are very different from such plebeian strains as we meet with in those later times. In passing from the cloudy domain of superstition to the region of hard realities the minstrels fortunately do not leave their imagination behind them. Just as they ennoble the vulgar prosaic features of the popular notions of the spirit world, so they soften the brutalities of the real life of rude times and clothe that life in a vesture of noble thoughts and generous sentiments. It will be objected that this is contradictory of what is universally received as one of the special merits of the ballads, their fearless acceptance of facts, however unlovely. That they do fearlessly accept facts is true. They show that courage which, in more than one artificial age, has seemed to be leaving the world—the courage to trust the truth in whatever shape; and perhaps the inculcation of this trust is the most valuable of all the lessons which this unsophisticated

poetry offers to men. But no mere chronicle of facts is history, and still less can it pretend to be poetry. The difference between the true poetry of the people, the high-class ballads, and those which halt along unrhythmical, unedifying, unadorned by any poetic grace or merit, is just this, that the former, when they record facts, present those facts imaginatively; and the latter, while not more truthful, leave out the imagination.

In the ballads of action all that is best in the life of the time and country finds a voice. I have called it a life of rude chivalry. The rudeness is only too evident, but the chivalry is no less real. Scot of Satchells defined a freebooter as "a cavalier who risks his life for gain"; and if he had been the wisest of students of the commonweal he could not have defined him better. Moss-trooping, raiding and reiving, cattle-driving, whatever the name by which the organised Border life of robbery was called, was an intolerable oppression on peaceful neighbours, a thing not to be endured in any well-ordered community. But it was a life of hardy virtues, and one which therefore is separated by a broad line from that of mere criminality. Like piracy in Homeric times it was sanctioned by public opinion, and this counted for much. The Border raider did not lose his self-respect; on the contrary, skill, daring, and success raised him in the judgment of his neighbours, and, by consequence, in his own eyes.

Scott's *Minstrelsy* contains several ballads of Border raids which throw more light perhaps than anything else on the ordinary life of the district. The cruelty of the harrying, the pathos of the harried man's position, the

courage to face every risk, the fellow-feeling springing from the sense of common danger and the intense clan spirit, all stand out with a distinctness almost unexampled in literature. The effect could only be produced by perfect simplicity and unflinching truth. The harrying of *Jamie Telfer of the Fair Dodhead* is a good example. The suddenness of the onset, the thoroughness with which the work is done, the pleading of the victim, mingled with his threats, and its mocking reception, are told with spirit. But the poetic merit rises in the latter part. The ruined man has nothing for it but to gather a band if he can, and by its help recover his cattle. He sets about it at once:—

> "The sun wasna up, but the moon was down,
> It was the gryming of a new-fa'n snaw,
> Jamie Telfer has run ten myles a-foot,
> Between the Dodhead and the Stobs's Ha'."

His first appeal for aid meets with a blank refusal, and he is nearly desperate:—

> "My hounds may a' rin masterless,
> My hawks may fly frae tree to tree,
> My lord may grip my vassal lands,
> For there again maun I never be."

But afterwards he meets with more success. Thoughts of kinship or memories of kindness rouse some of his neighbours. It is however through "auld Buccleuch," to whom Jamie has paid black-mail, that the whole district is brought to arms. They meet the Captain of Bewcastle on his way back with the plundered property, demand its restoration, and on his refusal engage in deadly battle. The chief incident in the struggle is the

death of Willie Scott and its effect on "auld Wat of Harden":—

"But he's taen aff his gude steel cap,
And thrice he's waved it in the air—
The Dinlay snaw was ne'er mair white
Nor the lyart locks of Harden's hair."

The battle goes in favour of the Scots, and Jamie Telfer gets poetic justice, receiving threefold that which he had lost.

Another specimen of the same class, *Kinmont Willie*, may be cited as illustrating the desperate risks a Border leader was willing to take on behalf of a dependant. It has a historical foundation, and Scott calls the event "one of the last and most gallant achievements performed upon the Border." The subject is the rescue from Carlisle Castle of William Armstrong of Kinmont, who had been seized in a time of truce. Buccleuch, as Keeper of the Border on the Scottish side, gathers a company, surprises the castle, liberates the captive, and swims the Eden in high flood. The exclamation put in the mouth of Lord Scroop with reference to the last exploit shows its desperate nature:—

"He is either himsell a devil frae hell,
Or else his mother a witch maun be;
I wad na have ridden that wan water,
For a' the gowd in Christentie."

The rescue of the prisoner was all that was attempted; in order to show respect for the peace there was no spoiling, and no violence was done except what was strictly necessary for Kinmont's liberation. The whole action is as chivalrous as any of the knightly deeds of daring.

The examples hitherto quoted have been taken exclusively from the events of that semi-private war which raged or smouldered incessantly along the Border. Still nobler traits mark those ballads which relate to circumstances of a wider and truly national interest. Of these the best are *Sir Patrick Spens* and the *Battle of Otterbourne.* The latter originates in an action much of the Border-raiding class, but lifted by its magnitude into a higher category. Something has been already said about the ballads of Otterburn. Whatever the place where they originated, the excellence of these ballads is unquestionable; and some of the most imaginative touches in the whole range of ballad literature are to be found in them. Such is the dream of Douglas:—

"But I hae dreamed a dreary dream,
Beyond the Isle of Skye;
I saw a dead man win a fight,
And I think that man was I."

And when the fatal wound is received he refers to the dream again and draws comfort from it:—

"'My nephew good,' the Douglas said,
'What recks the death of ane!
Last night I dreamed a dreary dream,
And I ken the day's thy ain.

"'My wound is deep; I fain would sleep;
Take thou the vanguard of the three,
And hide me by the bracken bush,
That grows on yonder lilye lee.

"'O bury me by the bracken bush
Beneath the blooming briar,
Let never living mortal ken,
That e'er a kindly Scot lies here.'"

There is high feeling too, and a beautiful desire to honour the great leader, in Montgomery's effort to make Percy yield to the bracken bush—that is, to the dead Douglas, who, unknown to Percy, lay beneath it. But neither in the ballads nor elsewhere in literature would it be easy to find loftier chivalry than that of Percy in the English version of the *Hunting of the Cheviot.* It is after the death of Douglas.

"The Perse leanyde on his brande,
And saw the Duglas de;
He tooke the dede man be the hande,
And sayd, 'Wo ys me for the!
To have savyde thy lyffe, I wold have pertyde with
My landes for years thre,
For a better man, of harte nare of hande,
Was not in all the north contre.'"

These are specimens of but a few of the many aspects of the ballads. Their range is considerably wider than is commonly supposed. Love, pathos, and pity are represented in them as well as daring activity. This sentimental side of the ballads is, as has been already said, on the whole, a later development than the aspects which have just been treated. It first appears not independently, but in conjunction with the simpler strain of action. For instance, after the crisis of *Sir Patrick Spens* the poet turns from those who have struggled and died to those who are doomed to passive suffering:—

"O lang, lang, may the ladyes sit,
Wi' their fans into their hand,
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the strand!

"And lang, lang, may the maidens sit,
Wi' their goud kaims in their hair,

A' waiting for their ain dear loves,
For them they'll see nae mair!"

Sometimes the sentiment, though genuine, receives a quaint utterance, as in the *Douglas Tragedy*, where the lady bids Lord William hold his hand, for

"True lovers I may get mony a ane,
But a father I can never get mair."

Simplicity is the most prominent quality here; but in the same ballad there is evidence of a subtle though perhaps unconscious artistic skill. Nowhere are repetitions more skilfully handled. Compare the mounting of the lovers when their flight begins and after the death of the lady's brothers:—

"He's mounted her on a milk-white steed,
And himself on a dappled grey,
With a buglet horn hung down by his side,
And lightly they rode away."

This stanza repeated afterwards with the single change of "lightly" in the last line into "slowly," is far more effective than any attempt to give variety could be.

Not infrequently the action narrated is of the most barbarous cruelty. Of this character is the story of Edom o' Gordon—in which a lady is shut up with her children in her castle, and there burnt to death. But in the description of the fate of the daughter the poet has the skill to turn cruelty into pathos:—

"O then bespake her daughter dear,
She was baith jimp and sma',
'O row me in a pair o' shiets,
And tow me ower the wa'.'

"They rowd her in a pair of shiets
And towd her ower the wa',
But, on the point of Edom's speir,
She gat a deadly fa'.

"O bonny, bonny was hir mouth,
And chirry were hir cheiks,
And cleir, cleir was hir zellow hair,
Whereon the red bluid dreips.

"Then wi' the speir he turn'd hir ower,
O gin hir face was wan!
He said, 'Zow are the first that e'er
I wisht alive again!

"He turn'd hir ower and ower again;
O gin hir skin was whyte!
He said, 'I might ha spard thy life,
To been some man's delyte.'"

In comparatively rare cases the whole motive of the ballad is sentimental, so that it stands in close affinity with the song. It is frequently so with the Yarrow ballads; and there is no better or more touching example than the *Border Widow's Lament*. Motherwell thought it was "nothing else than a fragment of the English ballad, entitled *The famous Flower of Serving Men; or, the Lady turn'd Serving Man.*" If so, a poet has been at work on the original, and has made the story his own. *The famous Flower of Serving Men* is a weak absurd piece, containing some lines which appear in the *Border Widow*, but entirely destitute of its beauty. The *Lament*, as it appears in the *Minstrelsy*, is so fine that, well known though it is, it must be quoted entire as an unapproached example of one kind of ballad:—

"My luve he built me a bonny bower,
And clad it a' wi' lilye flour

A brawer bower ye ne'er did see,
Than my true luve he built for me.

"There came a man, by middle day,
He spied his sport, and went away;
And brought the king that very night,
Who brake my bower, and slew my knight.

"He slew my knight, to me sae dear;
He slew my knight, and poin'd his gear,
My servants all for life did flee,
And left me in extremetie.

"I sew'd his sheet, making my mane;
I watch'd the corpse, myself alane;
I watch'd his body, night and day;
No living creature came that way.

"I took his body on my back,
And whiles I gaed, and whiles I sat;
I digg'd a grave, and laid him in,
And happ'd him with the sod sae green.

"But think na ye my heart was sair,
When I laid the moul' on his yellow hair;
O think na ye my heart was wae,
When I turn'd about, away to gae?

"Nae living man I'll love again,
Since that my lovely knight is slain;
Wi' ae lock of his yellow hair,
I'll chain my heart for evermair."

Enough perhaps has been said to prove that the ballads, notwithstanding the limitation of their range, are far from being destitute of variety. There remains however one feature in them, an occasional one, which is worthy of special mention, because it is little recognised. It is the truth and beauty of their incidental references to nature. Such references always are incidental, for no ballad-maker takes inanimate nature for his subject.

Still, the natural surroundings of the heroes could not be ignored, and they are touched skilfully though cursorily. Sometimes the powers of nature are interpreted as spirit: behind the storm is dimly seen the figure of the water-kelpie; the glamour of light and shadow in woodland and glade is explained by the myth of the fairies. In other cases the indiscriminate application of conventional epithets seems to indicate a certain obtuseness of sense. Nearly every river is a "wan water," an epithet which by frequent and indiscriminate use lost whatever meaning it may have had at first. Yet sometimes the ballad-maker shows a keen eye for the facts of the world around him, a sympathetic sense of their relation to humanity, and great felicity in the use of descriptive language. The line in *Young Tamlane*, "A north wind tore the bent," is, as Professor Veitch has pointed out, unsurpassed for pictorial truth. The "bent" is the tall coarse grass of upland pastures; and every one familiar with such scenes knows how truly the effect of a strong wind, unbroken as it is in such places by tree or hedge or shelter of any kind, is here given. In *Sir Patrick Spens* a single word gives a perfect picture of the ocean rising into storm—"gurly grew the sea"; and one of the lines quoted from *Jamie Telfer* conveys an impression hardly less vivid of another scene—"'twas the gryming of a new-fa'n snaw." In the last-mentioned ballad should also be noted the artistic skill which surrounds the harried man with just the scenes most consonant with his desolate condition—utter darkness—"the sun wasna up but the moon was down,"—and that peculiarly comfortless landscape which has neither the brightness of a perfect covering

of snow nor the warmth of the fully visible herbage. In the Yarrow ballads again there is an identification of the spirit of the scenery with the character of the action in which Wordsworth recognised something kindred to his own method. They are all pathetic, and the scenes are the "dowie dens" of Yarrow. They are not exactly descriptive ballads, but they exhibit what is rarer, a sense of the unity under difference of man and nature. Human passions and emotions are read into the scenes in which they are displayed.

Though the allusions to nature then are not very numerous, they have where they occur the accent of truth. It is strange that this cannot be said of the humour of the ballads. There is a strain of true humour in the songs from the earliest date, but in the ballads it is forced and inferior. Why this should be it is difficult to say; but the fact will hardly be disputed by any one familiar with Scottish ballad literature. Mirth is rare in it, and pieces, such as *The Lochmaben Harper*, which attempt to be mirthful, never rise to the level of those of a more serious cast. Even humorous touches in ballads prevailingly serious, like Thomas the Rhymer's rejection of the "tongue that can never lie," on the ground that it would hamper him in his dealings in the market, are rare.

The old ballads, whose main features have just been touched upon, having sprung as it were spontaneously into existence, remained for generations the literature of the people. It was fortunate that they kept their hold upon the popular taste and their place in the popular memory; for they were the means of preserving poetic feeling and a poetic tradition through ages most inimical

to every form of art; and when at last Scottish literature revived, great part of its inspiration was drawn from this source and from the kindred legacy of song which had likewise been handed down traditionally. It was both natural and fortunate that the new poets, who felt the merits of the work of their nameless predecessors, should attempt imitation. The Scotch writers—Ramsay, Thomson, Fergusson, Burns—just because they drank the waters of this fresh spring, helped to lead English poetry back to nature. Yet the imitation was not successful except in the department of song, which, in the hands of Burns, rose to higher excellence than it had ever before attained. The modern ballads cannot be said to surpass or even to equal their originals, though there are some fine specimens amongst them, from *Hardyknute* down to those of Scott and Hogg. There is a tendency even in the most skilful imitators to trick and frounce the ballad. It becomes smoother and more graceful; but the loss of the old simplicity and directness more than balances all that is gained. The reason is no doubt that circumstances had changed. The conditions under which the ballad was naturally produced had passed away, it had become an exotic. Not so with the songs. Song-writing was still a living form of literature; and accordingly Burns and the others who have re-created Scottish song for modern times had simply to follow in the old track. But the ballad required transformation; and it is only in Scott's *Lay* and his later poems that it worthily re-appears in modern literature. They embody the spirit of the ballad; but the form is modified, the artificiality of mere imitation shaken off, and freedom, spirit, and naturalness reign again.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE EARLIER SONGS.

THE relation between the songs of Scotland and the ballads is a very intimate one. They are alike popular in their character, were alike committed to tradition, and they have performed similar services in bringing about the revival of national poetry. But there are differences in their history as well as in their nature. On the one hand, there is more old documentary evidence for the existence of songs than of ballads, and they also began to be collected sooner than the ballads. None of the editors previous to Herd gives any considerable number of ballads, and no really large collection appeared until the issue of the *Border Minstrelsy;* but from Ramsay downwards the song books were numerous and copious. Yet it is true of the songs as of the ballads that in the shape in which we now know them they are almost all comparatively recent; and it is probable that there are among them fewer relics of genuine antiquity than among the ballads. The earliest traces of their existence are generally vague. Certain names preserved in *The Tale of Colkelbie Sow* and the prologues to Gavin Douglas's *Aeneid*, throw a feeble ray of light on the subject.

*The Complaynt of Scotland* too, as in the case of the ballads, has handed down the names at least of a number of songs; and *The Gude and Godly Ballates*, in an indirect way, have done more; for, as parodies, they preserve some knowledge of the structure of the originals on which they were founded. But though there is abundant proof of the existence of a considerable number of songs at least as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century, and though traces are found of a few of yet older date, it is as a rule impossible to recover the original words of these songs. The late Principal Shairp speaks on this point rather too strongly in his essay, *The Songs of Scotland before Burns*. "The oldest extant songs," says he, "cannot be proved at least to have existed before the year 1600." Now, that this statement may be brought even near the truth it is necessary to understand the name "song" to be strictly confined to verses set to music and habitually sung by the people. Of lyrical compositions having all the characteristics of songs there are plenty in the Bannatyne MS. Many of these lyrics however are literary exercises which were probably never known to the people, and were perhaps not in Shairp's mind as "songs" when he wrote the sentence quoted. But even in the most restricted sense that can be assigned to it the statement is not accurate. There *are* still extant Scotch songs of a popular character which can be traced considerably beyond the year 1600. The verses in praise of *Allane Matson* (probably the oldest form of the ballad of John Barleycorn)[1]

[1] There are several versions of John Barleycorn in the Roxburgh Ballads. Chappell there says the oldest copy is of the reign of

may be refused the title of a song; and the *Wyf of Auchtermochty*, an old version of the still well-known *John Grumbly*, likewise partakes of the nature of a ballad. The following lines from it however prove its connexion with a piece which is still popularly sung:—

"Than vp he gat on ane know heid,
On hir to cray, on hir to schowt,
Scho hard him, and scho hard him not,
Bot stowtly steird the stottis abowt.
Scho draif the day vnto the nicht,
Scho lowisit the plwch and syne come hame;
Scho fand all wrang that sowld bene richt,
I trow the man thocht richt grit schame."

If the ascription of this piece to Moffat, which is made in the Bannatyne MS., but not in the hand of Bannatyne, be correct, it belongs to the early part of the sixteenth century; and in any case it is over thirty years anterior to 1600. There is also the lively and amusing song of *Johne Blyth*,[1] which resembles the song in *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, "Back and side go bare, go bare." One stanza runs as follows:—

"For all the wrak a wreche can pak,
And in his baggis imbrace,
Yit Deid sall tak him be the bak,
And gar him cry Allace!
Than sall he frak away with lak,
And wait nocht to quhat place;
Than will they mak at him a knak,

James I. (of England), but doubts its southern origin. The Bannatyne MS. version, in which the ideas at any rate are essentially similar, is of course older still, and supports the notion of a northern origin.

[1] The name, like *Allane Matson*, is evidently descriptive of the character of the verses.

That maist of his gud haiss:
With ane O and ane I, quhile we haif tyme and space,
Mak we gud cheir quhile we art heir
And thank God of his grace."

*The Wowing of Jok and Jynny* is another humorous old song, the strain of which has been transmitted to much more recent verses:—

"Robeyn's Jok come to wow our Jynny
On our feist evin quhen we wer fow;
Scho brankit fast and maid hir bony,
And said, Jok, come ye for to wow?
Scho birneist her, baith breist and brow,
And maid hir cleir as ony clok;
Than spak hir deme, and said, I trow
Ye come to wow our Jynny, Jok."

Again, there is another piece beginning, "Was nocht gud King Solomon," to which is attached a refrain which nearly corresponds to one still known in popular Scottish song:—

"Gif this be trew, trew as it wass, lady, lady,
Suld nocht I scherwe yow, allace, my fair lady?"

This, however, is ascribed in a later hand to "ane Inglisman." And once more, one of the popular tunes, "Hay, now the day dauis," is not only fitted to a set of verses in *The Gude and Godly Ballates*, but, though the original words are lost, has received from the pen of Alexander Montgomery words not of the nature of a parody.

It appears then that Shairp's statement is made in terms too absolute: there are a certain number of Scottish songs which can be traced well into the sixteenth century. Nevertheless, such remnants of an older time are far too rare. The inquirer who gropes back beyond the union

of the Crowns has not only as a rule to be content with mere names, but has also to face the difficulty of determining the nationality of the tunes and songs indicated by those names. There long prevailed the uncritical practice, encouraged by the belief that England was nearly destitute of popular music and poetry, of assuming that whatever was mentioned by a Scottish authority must necessarily belong to Scotland. It has now however been proved that in England popular songs, though most of them have sunk into oblivion and are now known only to students, did at one time exist in plenty. Further, some English songs were popular in Scotland at least as far back as the fifteenth century. Care must therefore be taken not to ascribe to Scotland that which is really English. The critical examination to which the list in *The Complaynt of Scotland* has been subjected has resulted in the discovery in it of several English tunes. A similar doubt as to origin overhangs those which appear in more recent collections; and the difficulty has been increased by the fact that when, after the Restoration, Scotch music became fashionable in England, English literary hacks took to manufacturing Scotch songs.[1]

[1] The competence of Durfey and his fellows to manufacture Scotch songs may be gauged by their treatment of *The Blythsome Wedding*. In the *Pills to Purge Melancholy*, there is a song entitled *The Scotch Wedding*, which is simply *The Blythsome Wedding* in an extraordinary tongue which the Cockneys of that day were pleased to call Scotch. In this ridiculous piece the nervous phrases of the old song are turned into veritable nonsense. "Plouckie fac'd Wat in the Mill" becomes "pluggy fac'd"; "breeks" are changed to "brick" in a context which makes the word senseless; "Girn-again Gibby" becomes "Jenny go Gibby"; "fouth of good gappocks of skate," "fish of geud Gabback and Skate"; "powsodie," "prosody," etc.,

Commonly the music of the songs can be traced farther back than the words, and is the subject of more doubt. The history of English tunes has been carefully investigated by Chappell in his *Popular Music of the Olden Time;* and incidentally, though for the most part in a negative way, he throws some valuable light on the question of Scottish music. Of Scottish authorities, G. Farquhar Graham is the most trustworthy. Earlier inquirers, as Chappell justly complains, have been either biassed by national prejudice, or grossly ignorant if not wilfully false. On the other hand, it may be questioned whether the English writers on the subject have been themselves free from bias. They rely too much upon the oldest MS. copies of songs or tunes, forgetting that

etc. If a Scotch copy older than Durfey did not exist, it would be necessary, on the reasoning of Chappell, to assume the version in the *Pills* to be the original. He has done so in the case of *Bonny Dundee.* The first four lines in Durfey run thus:—

"Where gottest thou that Haver-mill bonack?
Blind Booby canst thou not see;
Ise got it out of the Scotch-man's wallet,
As he lig lousing him under a tree."

Herd's version is as follows:—

"O whar did ye get that hauver-meal bannock?
O silly blind body, O dinna ye see,
I got it frae a young brisk sodger laddie
Betwixt St. Johnston and bonny Dundee."

The "Haver-mill bonack" is quite sufficient to dispose of Durfey's title to originality. He gives the refrain, "Come fill up my cup," etc., which is not in Herd. The rest of his song has no connexion with Herd's version; it is merely a specimen of the silly lewdness which pleased his audience; and the "Scotification" consists in the use of the name Sawney, "Ise" for "I," etc.

allusions still older, if it can be established that they are allusions to the same songs or tunes, are evidence equally valuable. Chappell, for example, lays some stress on the fact that *Johne, come kiss me now*, which appears in an English publication of 1666, is not found in any Scotch copy older than a MS. which he dates as late as 1745. This is not much to the point; for *Johne, come kiss me now* was known in Scotland, and was sufficiently popular there to afford matter for the parodist, about the middle of the sixteenth century; and the mere existence of a Scotch copy of that date would in itself prove no more. It may not be Scotch, but its publication in England in 1666 clearly affords little or no presumption that it is English; while popular familiarity with it (which may be inferred from the fact that it was parodied) in Scotland a century earlier seems to turn the presumption quite the other way. Much the same may be said on the subject of the tune of *The Broom of Cowdenknows*. It is pointed out that the Scotch song to this tune was classed in *The Tea Table Miscellany* as new. But in the oldest known piece which is set to it, the English song of *The Lovely Northern Lass*, it is mentioned as "a pleasant Scotch tune called the Broom of Cowdenknows." The word Scotch may mean here, as it does frequently, "rustic," and it would be unsafe to found upon the use of it; but the occurrence of the word Cowdenknows, the name of a place about four miles from Melrose, cannot be so explained away. This tune is supposed to be the same as one referred to by Laneham under the name of *Broom, broom on hil*. There is no evidence of identity beyond the similarity of name, a kind of argument which is scorn-

fully rejected in other cases; but even if there were, *The Complaynt of Scotland*, which also refers to *Brume, brume on hil*, carries us back a quarter of a century beyond Laneham. The evidence—the most ancient reference, the name of the locality with which it is associated, and the description of it as "a pleasant Scotch tune"—seems all in favour of a Scottish origin; and yet Mr. Furnivall, in his edition of *Captain Cox, his Ballads and Books*, marks it without note of doubt as English. Where is the proof? In the reasonings of Chappell and Mr. Furnivall on this subject there seems to be a premise, generally suppressed, to the effect that Scotch tunes did not take root in England much before 1660: therefore, the argument would run, if a tune or a song is found common to the two countries before that time, it must have travelled from England to Scotland, not in the opposite direction. This is a gratuitous assumption. The English critics, in concluding that tunes and songs for which there is English authority must be English, are guilty of just the same fallacy which they fairly allege against their Scottish predecessors. Those very musicians, upon whose early presence at the Scottish court Chappell insists, might be the means of importing into England a knowledge of Scottish songs. It assuredly cannot be proved, and it is in itself improbable, that all the Englishmen died in the country to which they had migrated; and if any of them returned, what more natural than that they should bear back a knowledge of the tunes of the north, just as they seem to have made Scotland familiar with some of English origin? Every avenue of intercourse from north to south opens a similar possibility.

The subject of national music is however one into which there is no need to enter here. It is to the point only in so far as the tunes may be the means of tracing the history of the words; and the questions in dispute among the musicians are for the present purpose the less important, because very frequently where the origin of the tune is doubtful no such doubt attaches to the words. It will be sufficient therefore to state what evidence of old date there is of the existence of Scottish tunes. *The Complaynt* bears witness at once to words and music. *The Tale of Colkelbie Sow* proves the existence at least of the tunes. But no copies of Scottish music are known of nearly so great antiquity, none which date farther back than the seventeenth century. Perhaps the oldest is the Straloch MS., dated 1627-9. The Skene MSS., for which a greater antiquity was claimed by Stenhouse, are believed by the best judges to be at least as late as 1630-40. A MS. now lost, which was in Stenhouse's possession, was by him referred to the beginning of the reign of James VI.; but as he was too untrustworthy to be himself accepted as an authority, and as there is now no means of checking his opinion, it must be disregarded. Another collection known as the Rowallan MS., which belonged to Sir William Mure, who died in 1657, is unimportant because chiefly made up of foreign material. These are the oldest extant repositories of Scottish music. Through them and a few other MSS. of somewhat later date it is possible to trace back into the seventeenth century a considerable number of tunes. In some cases the songs sung to those tunes first appeared in Ramsay; and where these songs are

marked as old, it is fair to regard the music books as supporting their antiquity.

These two lines of evidence, the one relating to the words, the other to the music, do not after all establish any considerable antiquity. That there were songs centuries earlier than the period to which they reach is certain: the often-quoted fragments on Edward I. and on Bannockburn prove that; but the very frequency with which those fragments are quoted also proves how scanty are the remains. Practically, for the modern student, Scottish song begins in the sixteenth century, and it has no considerable volume till the beginning of the eighteenth. How far back the old songs recovered by the eighteenth century collectors may date it is impossible to say. We have seldom the means of tracing them even inferentially as we have in the case of several of the ballads. Few of them before the times of the Jacobite risings are historical; and few of them even embody facts of a traditionary character. Probably many were in existence generations before they appeared in print; but it is impossible as a rule to discriminate between pieces of immemorial antiquity and those which are by comparison but of yesterday. The term "old song" is elastic; and the early collectors have generally given no other means, if they possessed any themselves, of determining age. The pieces preserved by their care must be regarded somewhat differently from the ballads gathered by Scott and others. It has been already pointed out that there is reason to suppose that ballad-making had ceased for some time before ballad-collecting began; so that unless we adopt the Lady Wardlaw

hypothesis or some equivalent, the natural inference must be that a ballad preserved in the popular memory is of respectable antiquity. But the production of songs has never ceased to the present day. Further, it is known that when the merit of the old songs began to be perceived and interest in them to grow, men became aware also that many of them were too coarse even for the not very squeamish society of some two hundred years ago. The remark, more than once quoted since, of William Geddes in his *Saints' Recreation* expresses the opinion held by many. He says it is alleged by some "that many of our ayres or tunes are made by good angels, but the letters or lines of our songs by devils." To preserve the angelic part new words were written, which had often the effect of consigning the old to oblivion; and thus even when it can be proved that an old song to a particular tune existed, there remains a doubt whether the words which may still survive are the old song in question.

Many, therefore, of the old songs have disappeared; the history of others is shrouded in doubt; and there are only a few which can be traced back much beyond two hundred years. But while everyone must deeply regret the loss of memorials of the past which would have been interesting alike to the philologist, to the student of life and manners, and to the student of literature, it may be questioned whether as much poetry has perished with them as is commonly supposed. It is a known fact that ballads tend to deteriorate from age to age, and that when an older version is recovered it generally shows a force and fire far beyond anything in the

modernised copy—witness the difference between the ancient *Hunting of the Cheviot*, and the more recent *Chevy Chase*. That a similar deterioration has taken place in some of the songs is equally certain. Allan Ramsay and those coadjutors who in the early part of the eighteenth century supplied so many new verses to the old tunes, were by no means gifted with the sure taste afterwards displayed by Burns in performing the same task. In some instances, where the unsophisticated song exists, the inferiority of the additions may be demonstrated; in other cases there is great reason to suspect similar inferiority. Nevertheless it may be doubted whether the course of the songs has been on the whole, like that of the ballads, downward. That Burns adorned nearly every old song he touched is unquestionable; and so did Baroness Nairne and the other ladies who with her attempted to substitute purity for licentiousness, and innocent mirth for scurrility and low buffoonery. It is certain that the songs have been raised in moral tone. There is only too much reason to believe that the old words sung by the peasantry were in general very coarse. Neither Burns nor Allan Ramsay was given to straining at gnats; but they felt, in common with all who have laboured in the same field, that the rustic muse overstepped too far the bounds of decency. When this is the case it is generally found that licentiousness of language is the only *raison d'être* of the piece, those to whom it is addressed neither desiring nor understanding the beauties of poetry; and it may be suspected that such "high-kilted" pieces are, for their intrinsic merits as verse, no great loss to the world.

It is not however to be supposed that all in the old songs was worthless, feeble, or purely licentious. Burns, an excellent, though perhaps a prejudiced judge, spoke of the forgotten authors of those nameless old lyrics as men of genius; and there is much in the remains, especially perhaps in the remains of the songs of humour, to justify this strong language. It has been necessary to point out that the ballads are poor in humour. Not so the songs, they are brimming over with it. The song is a better vehicle for mirth than the ballad. Humour springs from the mode in which the poet views his subject; it is not naturally part of a narrative of facts, but a way of regarding events or life. The ballad method of narrative, therefore, is unfavourable to it; but not so the lyric appeal to sentiment. The chorus of the song too is helpful; it enlists the sympathy of the audience by making them partakers of the fun. Had not the quality of humour appeared where it does the literature of the people would in this respect have been inexplicably untrue to the national character, and inexplicably different from the more formal parts of the national literature. Notwithstanding all the jests levelled at the dense impenetrability to fun which is said to be a mark of the Scot, humour has been a quality always exceedingly prominent in Scottish literary men. In Dunbar, in Lindsay, in Buchanan, in Knox, in Burns, in Scott, in Carlyle, in almost every Scotchman of note in literature there is a deep and rich vein of it. There is a vein no less rich in popular song; and it is all the more interesting to note it because many of the songs were apparently produced under circumstances extremely unfavourable to

everything light-hearted. The Reformed Kirk denounced the curse of God not only against the sins of the people, but too often against their harmless mirth. How disastrous was the effect of those denunciations upon the recognised literature of the country is evident from the great blank in literature which the seventeenth century shows. Nothing that was merely worldly, or was regarded as such by the bigot, had a fair chance, unless it was too obscure to catch his eye. Happily, the song-writers were too obscure. Some indeed of the popular bards incurred punishment, but generally they presented a target too small for clerical shot. They made excellent use of their immunity. Whoever has formed an idea of the Scotchman as a solemn, saturnine animal, incapable of laughter, and finding life "fu' o' sairiousness," will be astonished at the revelation these song-writers make. Their mirth is not of the half-hearted kind; it is loud, riotous, scornful of decorum. The country was priest-ridden, or minister-and-elder-ridden; it was desperately poor; life for the greater number was altogether hard and unlovely. Yet the spirit of the popular singers is prevailingly and even immoderately mirthful. The pieces in the Bannatyne MS. may, and probably most of them do, descend from a time anterior to the religious troubles; but there are many in later collections which can only be regarded as the expression of joyousness springing irrepressibly from the midst of the gloom. Even in the heat of the struggles of the Covenant humour is the most conspicuous quality.

The humorous songs cover pretty nearly all the phases of rural life which are susceptible of such a treatment.

Courtship, marriage, matrimonial disputes, rustic extravagance and rustic parsimony, country festivities, bacchanalian good-fellowship, vagabondage—all are celebrated in verses as racy and fresh as any of their kind in existence. They are not free from coarseness; but there is little or nothing in them which merits the name of licentiousness. Time in this case has happily sunk the grosser matter, and carried down to us the relatively pure.

The favourite subject of the singer is almost of necessity love. It lends itself equally to a seriously sentimental and to a comic treatment. The songs of the latter description have the advantage of affording much information incidentally as to the condition of the country population. *The Wowing of Jok and Jynny*, from which a quotation has already been given, furnishes, through the vanity of the girl's mother, an inventory of common rustic possessions, doubtless somewhat of the nature of a caricature. So too, though with less elaboration, does *Muirland Willie*, another song of the same class marked Z (*i.e.* old) in *The Tea Table Miscellany*. The equipment of the wooer, "with durk and pistol by his side," as Burns remarks, points back to an unsettled state of the country when there was no assurance whether he who rode forth so furnished "would tilt with lips or lances." The wooing is conducted with a frankness which results in a speedy agreement, and yet not without a rude courtesy. The famous song of *The Blythsome Wedding*,[1] which is unsurpassed in

[1] This piece has been generally ascribed to Francis Semple of Beltrees, whose father, Robert Semple, is believed to have written *The Piper of Kilbarchan*. Another for whom *The Blythsome Wedding* has been claimed is Sir William Scott of Thirlestane; but the grounds

its class, depicts with wonderful spirit the final scene to which courtship is expected to lead. It bears curious witness to the prevalence of nicknames. In the long list of expected guests there are but two or three who are honoured with surnames, all the rest being distinguished by some personal appellative, generally referring either to profession or to a physical peculiarity. It paints too with great force and effect the barbarous plenty of a rustic feast. The author, whoever he was, had an intimate acquaintance with the details of Scotch humble life, an unfailing flow of language, and a rich gift of broad humour. Burns himself rarely portrayed with greater vigour a scene of rural jollity. Francis Semple has been credited also with the song of *Maggie Lauder*, which is in some respects similar to *The Blythsome Wedding*. No copy however is known earlier than Herd's collection. If, as is probable, this song really belongs to the seventeenth century, it is perhaps the most remarkable illustration extant of the mirth of country life; and that just because it refers to no pre-determined merry gathering, but is the spontaneous outburst of a chance meeting. The wandering piper and the merry dancer prove that the efforts to suppress human nature had been less successful than they seem on the surface to have been; otherwise the piper's profession could not have survived. And he was not the only one of his kind. The reference to Habbie Simson as a lost leader in the art shows that his was a well-known if irregular occupation.

on which it is assigned to either of them are so unsatisfactory that it must be treated as anonymous; nor is there any definite means of determining its date beyond the fact that it first appeared in Watson in 1706.

In *The Blythsome Wedding*, *Maggie Lauder*, etc., the humour is shown in the appreciative and sympathetic description of scenes naturally gay. It is therefore broad rather than sly. But the mark of slyness is no less frequently present. Sometimes matrimonial bickerings give occasion to it, sometimes it springs from the preaching of the philosophy of parsimony. Of the latter description an admirable specimen exists in *My jo Janet*, which first appeared in *The Tea Table Miscellany*, where it is without mark to indicate whether it was then old or new. But though the age of the verses is uncertain, the tune at least is as old as the Straloch and Skene MSS. This piece is a dialogue, the point of which is the quiet and skilful parrying of a country beauty's requests. In this, as in many other cases, an English version exists prior to that of Ramsay, but far inferior, and rather like a corruption than an original. Somewhat similar, but more out-spoken, is *The Cock-Laird* (*i.e.* small landowner), which is generally attributed to Ramsay, but which is in truth an old song touched up and made a little more decent, and also more witty, by him. An equally canny philosophy is inculcated in the famous old song, *Tak your auld cloak about ye*. Of this, as is well known from Othello, England possessed a version; and as it cannot be traced back in Scotland beyond *The Tea Table Miscellany*, it would be worse than rash to affirm its origin to be Scottish. It may be interesting however to quote the lines of the northern version which correspond with those in Shakespeare :—

"In days when our King Robert rang,
His trews they cost but half-a-croun;

He said they were a groat ower dear,
And ca'd the tailor thief and loon;
He was the King that wore a croun,
And thou's the man of laigh degree:
It's pride puts a' the country doun;
Sae tak thy auld cloak about ye."

In this instance it is the wife who preaches thrift and industry to the husband; as a rule the parts of the sexes are reversed, as in the examples spoken of above. In a different key, but still turning on marital disputes, is *The Barring of the Door*, certainly the best known at the present day of all its class. This song was recovered by Herd, but its age is absolutely unknown. It narrates a ludicrous adventure with inimitable vigour, and well deserves the favour it has kept for over a hundred years.

There is hardly any phase of life, however serious and even terrible, which may not serve the comic poet. Andrew Fletcher considered vagrancy in Scotland an evil so threatening as to justify the proposal to reduce the poorer population to slavery. His less philosophical countrymen, careless of the danger, have always been keenly alive to the humours of a life cut off from ordinary ties and responsibilities. This sympathy finds its most exuberant and most poetical expression in Burns's *Jolly Beggars*. Herd has preserved a song of nearly the same title as Burns's poem, *The Jolly Beggar;* and *The Tea Table Miscellany* contains a much more celebrated piece, *The Gaberlunzie Man*. The authorship of both has been attributed to no less a personage than James V.; but there is no evidence sufficient to connect them with him. In Ramsay *The Gaberlunzie Man* is marked with the letter "J," which may stand for the King; but even

if it was so meant, Ramsay's authority is not great. Whoever was the writer, his work is admirably done. The gaberlunzie is as void of care as any of Burns's beggars; and he succeeds in impressing the daughter of the house in which he finds shelter with the happiness of his life. The couple face the world with light-hearted glee:—

> "Meantime, far hint out ower the lea,
> Fu' snug in a glen, where nane could see,
> The twa, with kindly sport and glee,
> Cut frae a new cheese a whang.
> The prievin was guid—it pleased them baith;
> To lo'e her aye he gae her his aith;
> Quo' she, to leave thee I will be laith,
> My winsome gaberlunzie man."

In the ideal society such scenes and such subjects would be impossible; but until some approximation is made to that society it is perhaps not to be regretted that they can at times brighten the gaiety of nations. Many excellent people of the present day see however nothing but evil in a cognate class of songs through which there has run for generations a peculiarly rich strain of humour—the bacchanalian songs. A large number of the songs of humour have something to say in praise of drink; some are entirely devoted to it; and it can hardly be denied, whether the fact be matter for sorrow or not, that Bacchus has bestowed upon his votaries no small measure of inspiration. *Andro and his Cutty Gun*, one of Ramsay's collection, is what Burns called it, "the work of a master." But in all the class the highest place certainly belongs to *Todlin Hame*, which the same critic, competent alike from his gift of poetry and his spirit of conviviality, pronounced "perhaps the first bottle-song that ever was composed."

"When I hae a saxpence under my thoom,
Then I get credit in ilka toun;
But, aye when I'm poor they bid me gang by,
Oh, poverty pairts guid company!
Todlin hame, and todlin hame,
Couldna my love come todlin hame?

"Fair fa' the guidwife and send her guid sale;
She gies us white bannocks to relish her ale;
Syne, if that her tippeny chance to be sma',
We tak a guid scour o't, and ca't awa'.
Todlin hame, todlin hame,
As round as a neep come todlin hame.

"My kimmer and I lay doun to sleep,
And twa pint-stoups at our bed's feet;
And aye when we waken'd we drank them dry:—
What think ye o' my kimmer and I?
Todlin but, and todlin ben,
Sae round as my love comes todlin hame.

"Leeze me on liquor, my todlin dow,
Ye're aye sae guid-humour'd when weetin' your mou';
When sober sae sour, ye'll fecht wi' a flee,
That 'tis a blithe nicht to the bairns and me,
When todlin hame, todlin hame,
When, round as a neep, ye come todlin hame."

Poetry which is strong in humour is seldom or never deficient in sentiment and pathos; for humour implies the same sympathy on which these qualities rest. Accordingly we find that the popular singers of Scotland have been from the earliest times equally at home in either strain. As the audience for which they wrote was mainly agricultural, there being practically no manufactures and no large town populations, their poetry is frequently linked with agricultural pursuits. There are numerous pastoral songs,

some of them of high excellence. These songs are in no way related to the artificial pastoral founded upon classical models; it is no Arcadia which they picture, but the actual life of Scottish shepherds and husbandmen. The poets of the eighteenth century did, it is true, reduce it to conventionality; but a number of songs have been preserved in which the earlier, simpler, and more natural note is heard. Such are *Ettrick Banks*, which appeared in the *Orpheus Caledonius*, and to which Ramsay gave the place of honour in the fourth volume of *The Tea Table Miscellany*. Even finer is the *Ew-bughts Marion*, which Ramsay marks with the letter Q, to indicate that it is an old song with additions. But more interest still attaches to *O the ewe-bughtin's bonnie*, for the sake of its author, the Lady Grizzel Baillie, whose faithful attendance upon her father, Sir Patrick Home, when he was lurking in concealment in the family vault of Polwarth, forms one of the best known and most interesting of the stories of the sufferings of the Covenanters. She was the first of a numerous band of ladies of rank who laboured to purify, and who embellished while they purified, the songs of their country. Only two songs of Lady Grizzel's are known. A stanza of one of them, *Were na my heart licht I wad die*, was quoted, with a reference to himself, by Burns in his own later and sadder days:—

> "His bonnet stood aye fu' round on his broo;
> His auld ane look'd aye as weel as some's new;
> But now he lets 't wear ony gate it will hing,
> And casts himself dowie upon the corn-bing."

Her pastoral song is merely a fragment, but a beautiful one:—

"O, the ewe-buchtin's bonnie, baith e'ening and morn,
When our blythe shepherds play on the bog-reed and horn;
While we're milking, they're lilting, baith pleasant and clear—
But my heart 's like to break when I think on my dear.

"O, the shepherds take pleasure to blow on the horn,
To raise up their flocks o' sheep soon i' the morn;
On the bonnie green banks they feed pleasant and free,
But, alas, my dear heart, all my sighing 's for thee."

The love songs are as rich and varied as the songs of humour. Aspiration, hesitancy, success, the praise of the maiden's charms or of the youth's strength and courage, the pleasures of reunion, and the wail of the betrayed and forsaken, all come within the compass of the singer. None of its class can surpass *Aye waukin', O!*—a perfect song, which has had the fortune to be the subject of a perfect criticism[1]:—

"O, I'm wat, wat,
O, I'm wat and weary;
Yet fain wad I rise and rin
If I thocht I would meet my dearie.
Aye waukin', O!
Waukin' aye, and weary;
Sleep I can get nane
For thinkin' o' my dearie.

"Simmer 's a pleasant time,
Flowers o' every colour;
The water rins ower the heugh,
And I long for my true lover.

"When I sleep I dream,
When I wauk I'm eerie,
Sleep I can get nane,
For thinkin' o' my dearie.

[1] The criticism referred to is that of Dr. John Brown in *Horae Subsecivae;* and the song is here given according to his version of it.

"Lanely nicht comes on,
A' the lave are sleepin';
I think on my true love,
And blear my een wi' greetin'.

"Feather beds are saft—
Pentit rooms are bonnie;
But ae kiss o' my dear love
Better 's far than ony.

"O for Friday nicht!
Friday at the gloamin';
O for Friday nicht—
Friday 's lang o' comin'!"

The collection of Herd includes a few wonderfully beautiful fragments. The exquisite lines beginning, *O gin my love were yon red rose*, are widely known through Burns. Another, the song of a forsaken woman, though perhaps less popular, has an equal charm :—

"False luve, and hae ye played me this,
In the simmer, 'mid the flowers?
I sall repay ye back again,
In the winter 'mid the showers.

"Bot again, dear luve, and again, dear luve,
Will ye not turn again?
As ye look to ither women,
Sall I to ither men."

More characteristic of Scotland is the charming song of reunion, *Here awa', there awa'*. It is one of those which underwent revision at the hands of Burns; but though he has added some beauties he has destroyed others. There is perhaps nothing in the old version as given by Herd equal to the lines,

"Now welcome the simmer and welcome my Willie,
The simmer to nature, my Willie to me";

but, as a whole, the old song is the finer of the two:—

"Here awa', there awa', here awa' Willie,
Here awa', there awa', here awa' hame!
Lang have I sought thee, dear have I bought thee,
Now I have gotten my Willie again.

"Thro' the lang muir I have followed my Willie;
Through the lang muir I have followed him hame,
Whatever betide us, nocht shall divide us;
Love now rewards all my sorrow and pain.

"Here awa', there awa', here awa' Willie,
Here awa', there awa', here awa' hame!
Come, Love, believe me, nothing can grieve me,
Ilka thing pleases while Willie 's at hame."

Songs with a strain of pathos such as this take always a deeper hold upon the feelings than those of a lighter character. The effect is not lessened when the pathos is unrelieved by a happy end. Of the older songs which are purely pathetic, two have been generally singled out as of surpassing excellence. One of these, commonly known as *Lady Anne Bothwell's Lament*, has been proved to be of English origin; the other, *Waly, Waly*, whose poetic merit is at least equal, is Scotch. Attempts have been made to give a historical account of it; but there does not seem to be sufficient ground for identifying the song with any particular person or event. In Ramsay it bears the mark of unknown age, Z.

"O waly, waly up the bank,
And waly, waly down the brae,
And waly, waly yon burn-side,
Where I and my love wont to gae.
I lean'd my back unto an aik,
I thought it was a trusty tree,
But first it bow'd, and syne it brak,
Sae my true love did lightly me.

" O waly, waly, but love be bonny,
A little time while it is new,
But when 'tis auld, it waxeth cauld,
And fades away like morning-dew.
O wherefore should I busk my head?
Or wherefore should I kame my hair?
For my true love has me forsook,
And says he'll never love me mair.

" Now Arthur Seat shall be my bed,
The sheets shall ne'er be fyl'd by me,
Saint Anton's well shall be my drink,
Since my true love has forsaken me.
Martinmas wind when wilt thou blaw,
And shake the green leaves off the tree?
O gentle death, when wilt thou come?
For of my life I am weary.

" 'Tis not the frost that freezes fell,
Nor blawing snaw's inclemencie:
'Tis not sic cauld that maks me cry,
But my love's heart grown cauld to me.
When we came in by Glasgow town,
We were a comely sight to see;
My love was clad in the black velvet,
And I mysell in cramasie.

" But had I wist before I kiss'd,
That love had been sae ill to win,
I'd lock'd my heart in a case of gold,
And pinn'd it with a silver pin.
Oh, oh! if my young babe were born,
And set upon the nurse's knee,
And I mysell were dead and gane;
For a maid again I'll never be."

But though the most copious illustrations of pathos are to be found among the love songs, there are some exquisite touches of the kind referring to other concerns of life. There are few more beautiful verses among the songs than

those of *Armstrong's Goodnight*, in the *Border Minstrelsy*. "The following verses," says Scott, "are said to have been composed by one of the Armstrongs, executed for the murder of Sir John Carmichael of Edrom, Warden of the Middle Marches. The tune is popular in Scotland; but whether these are the original words, will admit of a doubt." The murder of Sir John Carmichael occurred in 1600. The verses run thus:—

"This night is my departing night,
For here nae langer must I stay;
There's neither friend nor foe o' mine,
But wishes me away.

"What I have done thro' lack of wit,
I never, never can recall;
I hope ye're a' my friends as yet;
Goodnight, and joy be with you all!"

Again, in the song of *Leader Haughs and Yarrow*, the poet takes upon himself a wider range of sympathy. Not his own fate, nor the feeling of his personal friends, but the state of the country, the contrast between the present and the past, is the source of his feeling.

"Sing Erslington and Cowdenknowes,
Where Homes had ance commanding;
And Drygrange, with the milk-white yowes,
'Twixt Tweed and Leader standing:
The bird that flees through Redpath trees
And Gladswood banks ilk morrow,
May chant and sing sweet Leader Haughs
And bonnie howms of Yarrow.

"But minstrel Burne cannot assuage
His grief, while life endureth,
To see the changes of this age,
Which fleeting time procureth:

For many a place stands in hard case,
Where blyth folk ken'd nae sorrow,
With Homes that dwelt on Leader-side,
And Scotts that dwelt on Yarrow."

In these lines we may note the skill with which the old bard uses proper names, an art which Mr. Palgrave justly regards as one of the marks of the true poet. The piece was the work of a man named Burne, one of the last who in the seventeenth century plied the trade of minstrel; and one who, as a member of a profession sinking under the changes of fleeting time, was entitled to complain of those changes, and of the altered fortunes of great families. This lament of the minstrel over the passing away of all things old, may fitly close the notice of the older songs. Those of a later date belong to a state of society widely different, especially upon that Border land to which the minstrel belonged.

END OF VOL. I.

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